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Security Council

Fifty-first Year

Provisional

3698th Meeting
Friday, 27 September 1996, 4 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Cabral	(Guinea-Bissau)
Members:	Botswana	Mr. Legwaila
	Chile	Mr. Osomavía
	China	Mr. Qin Huasun
	Egypt	Mr. Elaraby
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Germany	Mr. Eitel
	Honduras	Mr. Martínez Blanco
	Indonesia	Mr. Wisnumurti
	Italy	Mr. Fulci
	Poland	Mr. Rosati
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Park
	Russian Federation	Mr. Fedotov
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Weston
	United States of America	Mrs. Albright

Agenda

The situation in the occupied Arab Territories

Letter dated 26 September 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1996/790)

Letter dated 26 September 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1996/792)

96-86309 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

The meeting was suspended at 1.05 p.m. and resumed at 5 p.m.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Australia, Bahrain, Cuba, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Sudan and Yemen in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite these representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Downer (Australia), Mr. Al-Khalifa (Bahrain), Mr. Rodriguez Parrilla (Cuba), Mr. Shah (India), Mr. Velayati (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. Madadha (Jordan), Mr. Muntasser (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Mr. Abdulla (Oman), Mr. Allagany (Saudi Arabia), Mr. Taha (Sudan), Mr. Al-Shara (Syrian Arab Republic) and Mr. Al-Eryany (Yemen) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I should like to inform the Members of the Council that I have received a letter dated 27 September 1996 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to the United Nations, which reads as follows:

> "In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I have the honour to request to be invited to participate in the debate on the situation in the occupied Arab territories, under rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council."

On previous occasions the Security Council has extended invitations to representatives of other United Nations bodies in connection with the consideration of matters on its agenda. In accordance with past practice in this matter, I propose that the Council extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Ibra Deguène Ka.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 27 September 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Guinea to the United Nations, which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that the Security Council extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Engin A. Ansay, Permanent Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations, during the Council's discussion of the item entitled 'The situation in the occupied Arab territories'."

This letter has been issued as a document of the Security Council under symbol S/1996/799. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 to Mr. Engin A. Ansay.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

Mr. Fulci (Italy): Allow me first of all to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. Your wisdom, impartiality and high degree of professionalism have been an art and a constant guarantee of our effectiveness. At the same time, I wish to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Tono Eitel, Permanent Representative of Germany, for his exemplary leadership of our proceedings for the month of August.

Let me also say at the outset that Italy fully associates itself with and subscribes to the statement that will be made later on by Ireland on behalf of the European Union.

Almost exactly three years ago, on 13 September 1993, we witnessed a great moment in contemporary history: the Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin, and the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, shook hands on the White House lawn, marking the start of a peace process that until then had seemed absolutely impossible.

This happened because of the dedication, tenacity and hard work of men and women of good will from several countries who never lost faith. They overcame difficulties that had been considered insurmountable for many years. The Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the two

main architects of this watershed sanctioned the transition to a new era in relations between the Israelis and Palestinians.

Since then, amid enormous and ongoing difficulties, and at times misunderstandings, the peace process has continued. Not even the tragic assassination of Prime Minister Rabin could stop it.

When the new Israeli Government was installed, its commitment to continue to implement the peace agreements was greeted with profound satisfaction by the entire international community.

Unfortunately, in the past three days, a spiral of events has taken place that is threatening the very foundation of this peace process. One of the deepest values of mankind, religious sentiment, has entered the fray. Feelings like this obviously risk igniting powerful emotional reactions, as was unfortunately confirmed by the grave events that followed.

Something unprecedented has now occurred. For the very first time, the Palestinian police and the Israeli soldiers, who are supposed to be together leading the way to peace, exchanged gunfire instead. It seems that the ensuing clashes were the heaviest in many years. And, according to reports, this morning — this morning alone — in a third day of violence, 10 more people lost their lives.

Needless to say, such an event is a setback for the peace process; worse than that, it could turn back the clock that until now had been marking the hours of hope. In fact, the concrete risk is that the situation may spin out of control — that violence will beget more violence.

I would like to recall at this point that the Irish Presidency of the European Union had appealed to all the parties concerned to immediately stop the violent confrontation and resume negotiation. The European Union troika — that is to say, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands — met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel here in New York on Wednesday, 25 September, to express grave concern over a possible escalation of the conflict and disquiet over the current fragility of the peace process. The European Union troika also reiterated the Florence Declaration of 19 June 1996, according to which the Oslo agreements are the only way to achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East.

In line with these European steps, the Prime Minister of Italy, the Honourable Romano Prodi, personally contacted President Arafat by phone. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy, Lamberto Dini said yesterday:

> "Now Israel needs to send a signal. It needs to take action that will demonstrate that it really remains committed to peace."

In fact, there are concrete measures that the Israeli Government can take unilaterally to implement its commitments in a concrete way and to dispel the misgivings and deeply felt concerns, not only of the Palestinians and of the Arabs, but of many other countries whose voices we have heard this morning. Such measures were also discussed at the meeting some weeks ago between President Arafat and Prime Minister Netanyahu.

Like the great majority of nations, Italy hopes that all the frantic efforts being made in these very hours to save the peace process may be truly successful. But they must be successful quickly because there is not one minute to lose. Meanwhile, we join the appeal of other members of the Security Council to the Israelis and the Palestinians to stop fighting.

Action must be taken rapidly to appease restless consciences. We believe that, in the current phase, this is the primary, though not exclusive responsibility of the Israeli Government. The good will, commitment and courage that have been invested in the peace process must not be squandered. This is the sincere hope, this is the expectation of the Italian Government, of our Parliament and of our entire people.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the representative of Italy for the kind words addressed to me and my predecessor.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): In recent days, Israeli forces have clashed with Palestinian demonstrators in the areas of Palestinian self-administration, resulting in bloodshed and the wounding and killing of several hundred Palestinians. The international community has expressed its grave concern over these occurrences. The Chinese Government and people deeply deplore these unfortunate events and offer their profound sympathy and condolences to the innocent victims and their families. We believe that these acts of the Israeli forces are clearly not conducive to peace and stability in the region. We urge the parties concerned to take immediate measures to halt the conflict and prevent further bloodshed.

The Palestinian-Israeli peace talks are now at a critical juncture. We urge the parties concerned to exercise restraint and to keep calm, to cherish the hard-won peace and to comply strictly with the agreements concluded between them, including the agreement on the resolution of the final status of Jerusalem. They should refrain from any action that would further aggravate the situation and impair the peace process in the Middle East, thus establishing a favourable atmosphere for the prompt resumption of Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations.

The international community is disturbed at the difficulties facing the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks. We are of the view that, in order to break the current impasse and prevent a set-back of the whole peace process in the Middle East, the parties concerned must make greater efforts to overcome interference and obstacles with a view to implementing the concluded agreements as soon as possible. Only in this way will it be possible to consolidate the progress that has been achieved in the peace talks and push forward the peace process in the Middle East.

The question of Palestine is at the core of the Middle East question. The early settlement of the Palestinian question in a just and reasonable manner, as well as the restoration of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, are the keys to the achievement of peace, stability and development in the Middle East region.

China has consistently supported the Middle East process. We have maintained that a political settlement to the Middle East question should be sought on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions and in accordance with the principle of "land for peace". We believe that the achievement of peace in the Middle East is the common aspiration of the peoples of the region. It is in keeping with the fundamental interests of the peoples of all countries in the region, as well as with peace and stability in the world at large.

Mrs. Albright (United States of America): The United States Government joins other members of this Council in expressing deep sorrow and regret at the loss of life during these past few days in the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem. We offer our condolences to the families of the victims. We extend our sympathies to the injured.

Our focus today should be on how to stop the violence. That violence is an unfolding tragedy not only for the victims, but also for the hopes invested in the peace process. We want to restore that process, as it is the best way to end the continuing sorrows, not only now, but for the future as well.

Our first objective is to restore calm. Our second objective is to accelerate the negotiating process. That process is the way to resolve key outstanding issues for implementation of the Interim Agreement. Implementation must go forward. Tangible results must be seen.

To be effective, both sides must reach out to each other as real partners. Partners take into account the needs of others. Both sides must feel a heightened sense of mutuality which underscores partnership and enables it to work. Both sides should keep that reality in mind as they consider their actions.

We are working intensively with both sides to achieve a restoration of calm and forward movement to produce tangible, positive events on the ground. The members of this Council should focus on how to help, how to restore calm, how to encourage the peace process, and how to make and consolidate real gains.

Words here are no substitute for action in the region. Only through such action can we restore that essential component to the peace process: a sense of hope. Hope is what sustains progress and the process in the Middle East is such that it cannot stand still.

During the past few years, we have seen the dawn of high hope and promise in the Middle East. It is a cause of great sadness that this era is mixed with moments of deep sorrow. Innocent victims, Palestinians and Israelis alike, have suffered senseless violence. Rhetoric offers them no comfort. It does not advance the cause of peace. It does not bring closer the day when the people of the Middle East can live in safety and lead normal lives.

Instead, such rhetoric encourages extremism and diverts attention from the task at hand: restoring a situation in which we can return to progress towards a comprehensive and lasting peace. Let us turn our attention not towards condemnation, but towards encouraging the parties to restore the peace process and return to efforts to achieve concrete progress.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): Traditionally, the month of September at the United Nations has been one which, with the commencement of a new session of the General Assembly, rings with renewed hopes for peace.

With the recent developments in the Israeli-Palestinian relationship, however, a sombre shadow has been cast over this Chamber today.

My delegation, fully recognizing the far-reaching implications which the Middle East carries for international peace and security, has consistently supported the peace process in that region and has closely followed the progress of its implementation. We consider the latest clashes in the West Bank, which have been deemed the worst since the 1993 Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, to be detrimental not only in terms of the heavy casualties, but also because of the nature of the fighting between the Israeli military and the Palestinian police force.

If steps are not taken to curb the fighting, then the current situation in the West Bank, which has turned into a grim confrontation between organized forces, may do immeasurable damage to the already shaky efforts for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region.

As we are well aware, the catalyst for this explosive and tragic turn of events was the Israeli decision to open a new entrance to a tunnel that runs under a major religious site in Jerusalem. Although this decision may have been based upon practical considerations, the highly sensitive political factors should have been taken into consideration. Indeed, given the extremely fragile and sensitive state of affairs in Jerusalem, opening the entrance was perceived by Palestinians as a deliberate challenge to the status quo in that city. In this regard, my delegation believes that the violence that has ensued from this action could have easily been anticipated and thus avoided.

As I mentioned at the Council meeting convened on 15 April to discuss Israel's measures to close its borders with the West Bank and Gaza, it is the wisdom, courage and patience of both Israelis and Palestinians that will enable them to overcome the crisis before them. I reiterate my view that as the problems facing the two peoples are man-made, so too can a workable solution be forged among them.

In the face of such crises, one of the highest priorities for the international community has always been to prevent the situation from degenerating into further violence. With that said, perhaps one of the best ways to contain the situation in the West Bank is to restore the status quo. All the delicate issues related to the status of Jerusalem could then be discussed in a reasoned and more dispassionate manner through the negotiations on final status.

The Republic of Korea, along with the rest of the international community, still believes that Israel and Palestine both realize the crucial stake they have in continuing the peace process, and thus hopes that the spirit of compromise and cooperation can be revived in their relations. More specifically, we hope that the current tensions can be defused in a prompt manner through a summit meeting between the two parties, and therefore appreciate the diplomatic efforts currently under way to facilitate such a dialogue.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to appeal once again to both parties to implement faithfully the agreements they freely entered into on the basis of Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) so that, through the exercise of restraint, the current crisis can be overcome, and the march towards reconciliation can resume at a full pace.

Mr. Legwaila (Botswana): Botswana is alarmed by developments in the occupied Arab territories. We are dismayed by the soaring number of the casualties of the wanton violence that is being wreaked mainly on the innocent. These developments are the culmination of a series of events whose common genesis is the nearly comatose state in which the peace process has been languishing in the past few months. The difficult economic conditions under which the Palestinians live as a result of the border closures have exacted a heavy toll on their everyday lives. Work and travel restrictions, and the slowdown in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process have exacerbated the growing frustration among the Palestinian people. The agreements signed between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization had given the people of Palestine a profound hope that at long last they could look forward to a peaceful future. The policies of the Government of Israel which have had the effect of reversing some important aspects of the peace agreements have dashed their hopes. The Palestinians were bound to lose their sense of purpose in the circumstances. And, as we all know, and as history has taught us, people in such situations resort to all manner of desperate acts.

Israel and the Palestinian Authority have accepted that they cannot build peace on one another's graves. They have committed themselves to agreements aimed at establishing a just, comprehensive and lasting peace. The international community has warmly and wholeheartedly welcomed the emergence of such common ground between the two peoples. The Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority should focus attention on the

arduous task of building the foundations of durable peace and not on the digging of graves to bury their dead. The present situation should not be allowed to derail the peace process and return the Middle East to the dark ages of endless bloodletting. The agreements between the parties provide a framework for mutual accommodation and cooperation. The parties should not lose this window of opportunity. This calls for mutual respect and for understanding of the interests and concerns of both parties. In this regard, the highly controversial decision by the Government of Israel to open a tunnel under the third-holiest Muslim site was an act of insensitivity to the religious concerns of the Palestinians. It is not in the interests of Israel to ignore these concerns.

The armed confrontation between the Israeli Defence Force and the Palestinian Authority police is an unfortunate and ominous development which can seriously poison the atmosphere of cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on important security matters. Israel and the Palestinian Authority need each other to manage these delicate issues. The atmosphere of trust and mutual confidence engendered by the joint patrols of the security forces was an important element in the implementation of the peace process. The security forces of Israel and the Palestinian Authority have a crucial role to play in the peace process, and conflict between them should be avoided as much as possible.

The Security Council has a responsibility to ensure the reduction of tension in the area. It should help the parties to give the necessary momentum to the peace process. In this context, we appeal to the Government of Israel to honour its obligations under the agreements signed with the Palestinian Authority. The resumption of the implementation of the Interim Agreement, in particular the Israeli withdrawal from Hebron, is crucial to rebuilding confidence and energizing the peace process.

Botswana acknowledges the diplomatic efforts undertaken by a number of countries to de-escalate the volatile situation in the area. It is our hope that the efforts undertaken by these countries will complement those of the Security Council. The international community is unanimous on the need for an urgent and permanent solution to the problems of the Middle East. It is crucial that the parties receive the same message from today's debate. It must be made abundantly clear that the backward policies of war are not acceptable. Common sense and civilized conduct must prevail.

The Israelis and the Palestinians need to be constantly reminded that their destinies are permanently and inextricably interlinked by reason of geography and history. They cannot wish one another away. They have battled and killed each other's children generation after generation, but this has not resolved their differences. They must try another route — jointly and not separately — to reach the lofty goals of their national dreams. Peace is their imperative. The one cannot have peace without the peace of the other. Equally, the sense of safety and security for the self-preservation of one side would be meaningless if it were not anchored on similar conditions for the safety and security of the other side for its own self-preservation.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Guinea-Bissau.

The confrontations over the last two days in Jerusalem and Ramallah, but also in Nablus, Bethlehem and Gaza, have prompted members of this Council to hold a formal meeting of the Security Council today, as demanded by the situation.

Peace and security in this region of the world are indeed gravely threatened. The peace process in the Middle East risks being hampered and even cast into doubt. Direct confrontations between the security forces of the two camps, which until now have been contained or averted, have broken out and shown the extent to which the climate of trust so necessary to the establishment of peace has been affected. Confidence must be restored, rancour dispelled. It is indispensable, even urgent, to return to the negotiating table, for violence has burst onto the scene with swift and deadly intensity. Human lives are being destroyed. The wounds of yesterday, already hard enough to heal, are now reopened and the chances of seeing them close for good are diminishing. Peace, the peace of the brave we thought to be at hand, seems to be fading into the distance. And yet each one of us still remembers the powerful, indelible images and the historic handshake between Chairman Yasser Arafat and the late Prime Minister Rabin. So many hopes were inspired then, and feelings revived.

Rather than exacerbating tensions and deepening differences by digging this tunnel under the Al Aqsa Mosque, a mosque whose symbolism escapes no one, it is important to promote and respect direct dialogue between Palestinian and Israeli leaders, to appeal for

restraint and calm and to take every measure required to restore peace.

We believe that it is important to acknowledge very clearly and loudly the validity of the agreements that have been signed and to respect them scrupulously. We cannot stop halfway because there is no such thing as half a peace. The peace process cannot hinge on electoral issues and must be free from the political considerations of the moment.

We believe it is necessary for dialogue to continue and for the obstacles to be overcome. An end must be put to the actions of all extremists, which only exacerbate tensions and provoke further violence and useless killing.

In short, we consider it necessary to take hold of the situation by eliminating all factors of confrontation. It is indispensable to respect the agreements that have been signed. One must act, and act quickly, in a sincere and constructive direction, calling for the removal of taboos, the elimination of unrealistic conditions and the good will and flexibility without which past, present and future difficulties cannot be overcome.

My country believes that an urgent meeting between President Arafat and Prime Minister Netanyahu is required, but it would best be preceded by specific actions. The closure of the tunnel is one such action, and we believe that other gestures of reassurance must follow immediately.

It is in this direction, and on the basis of the concerns we have just expressed on behalf of our delegation, that we would like the see the Security Council deliberate and decide.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria, His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Attaf, who will make a statement in his capacity as Chairman of the Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the League of Arab States. I welcome him, and invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Attaf (Algeria) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Security Council is meeting today at a time when the Palestinian territories are enduring an extremely dangerous situation that can be described as a new downturn in the peace process in the Middle East.

The international community has been keenly involved in this process. Because of the obstacles experienced and the serious hindrances caused by the Israeli leadership's failure to respect its commitments, our Council must today face the logical results of such a situation and of the Israeli attitude, which differs greatly from what the international community has set down as the fundamental principles for a peaceful, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Israeli design still fails to respect the rights of others and is aimed at imposing a peace that benefits only one party, posing the possibility of the security of that party to the detriment of legitimate Arab security. The horrendous Israeli provocations, that violate the fundamental duty of respect for holy sites, recognized by the entire world, are represented by the opening of a tunnel under the Al Aqsa Mosque. This is part of Israel's intransigent flouting of everything the international community has decided about commitments and conditions for the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This policy has an end and a means. It recently took concrete form, as everyone knows, through the freezing of the Israeli withdrawal from Hebron, the refusal to resume negotiations on the final situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, the return to the policy of settlements, the blocking off of the Palestinian territories, the confiscation of Arab lands and the collective economic sanctions and daily acts of violence against the unarmed civilian population.

My country condemns this policy, which runs counter to peace as a whole and peace in all its particulars.

How can the Security Council meet the challenges it faces today in fully shouldering its responsibilities in a conflict wherein the conditions for a settlement are set down in its own resolutions, which today have been flagrantly and arrogantly flouted by Israel?

Secondly, the present policy of the Israeli leadership runs counter to the very logic and meaning of the peace process. It no longer considers itself bound by the agreements of the Madrid Conference or the resolutions of the Council. It no longer respects the Washington and Oslo agreements. The resumption of negotiations with Syria and Lebanon at the point at which they were interrupted are no longer acceptable to the Israeli administration.

Thirdly, based on the above, it is clear that, while claiming to desire the unconditional relaunching of the peace process, Israel is exploiting the delay in order to redefine and threaten it as a whole. What kind of peace can be established and maintained without the total recovery by the Palestinian people of its rights, including its right to the creation of its own State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital? What peace can be established and maintained without the complete withdrawal of Israel from the Syrian Golan Heights? What kind of peace can be established and maintained without a full and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon?

Fourthly, given Israel's scornful flouting of its commitments, we can only assume that it entertains the unrealistic notion that peace can be based on the rejection of Arab rights and Israeli security on Arab insecurity.

Fifthly, no one can today deny that the Israeli position is a defiance of the international community, and in particular of the Security Council in its function as the organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. The failure to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict is, in fact, a violation of the Council's resolutions.

Finally, the events at the Al-Aqsa Mosque fall within the framework of a well-known and carefully thought-out plan for total judaization of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, in contravention of international legitimacy, including the position of the Security Council.

At a time when the Palestinian territories are going through a tragic period, which follows upon a period of hope, and when the peace process as a whole is at a total standstill, the Security Council must fully shoulder its responsibilities by issuing a just opinion sustaining a just cause, rejecting the policy of *fait accompli* and condemning Israel's refusal to respect the commitments it has undertaken.

This means, first, that the tunnel must be closed, since its use is a violation of the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. In addition, the deteriorating situation in the occupied territories requires that Israel fully respect its commitments under the Oslo and Washington agreements and that it lift all its repressive measures, which run counter to a policy of peace and are causing the sufferings of the Palestinian people today.

Secondly, given the obstacles currently hindering the peace process in the Middle East, the Security Council has the responsibility once again to emphasize the Madrid agreements as a general framework for the peace process in the Middle East. The Council must also enshrine the principle of "land for peace" as a basic condition for this process and reaffirm that its resolutions form the basis for this process.

At the most recent Cairo summit, the Arab leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the peace process as a strategic choice. However, this process must not be a one-way street. That is why the international community — primarily represented by the Council, the sponsor of the peace process — and all parties involved must today, more than ever before, make serious efforts to reactivate the peace process in the Middle East by requiring Israel to renounce its intransigent policy of rejection. This policy has led to the tragic situation we are considering today and will doubtless lead to others if we do not find a definitive solution to the situation.

Finally, I turn to you, Sir, in expressing my warm congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and my wishes for your success.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the Foreign Minister of Algeria for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait, His Excellency Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. I welcome him and invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al-Sabah (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to convey to you, Sir, our sincere congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I wish also to pay tribute to your predecessor for his stewardship of the Council last month.

The Security Council is meeting today at the request of the Arab Group at the United Nations, which cannot remain silent about the ongoing events in the occupied West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Holy City of Jerusalem, the first *Kiblah* and the site of the third Grand Mosque, in the wake of the opening by Israel of the tunnel constructed under the western wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The Council's accession to that request shows its appreciation of the threat of the tunnel project to the physical safety of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. It also shows the

Council's sensitivity to the current critical phase of the peace process in the region. Furthermore, it reflects the Council's perception of the gravity of the situation in the wake of the conflagration sparked by Israeli measures that constitute a stark challenge to and a repugnant provocation of the sentiments of the Palestinian people — indeed, a provocation to all Arabs and Muslims throughout the world.

These measures are taken within an overall plan of action by Israel to judaize Jerusalem, change its Arab character, alter its legal status and suppress its Islamic physical features and cultural heritage. Indeed, they are part of a series of steps intended to impose new facts on the ground in a bid to depopulate Jerusalem of its Arab citizens, build new settlements and expand the existing ones inside the city and in its surrounding areas.

All of these Israeli measures are not the outcome of a policy that came into being overnight. They are, rather, the direct result of a long-term and focused plan of action that took concrete and unmistakable shape following the assumption of power by the new Israeli Government, which is pursuing an aggressive expansionist policy in violation of the agreements concluded by the former Government of Israel. Those agreements provide for negotiations on the determination of the status of the City of Jerusalem in the course of the final stage of talks. Thus, Israel has reneged on its legally binding obligations under the Oslo agreement as well as disregarded the Security Council resolutions regarding the City of Jerusalem.

These Israeli actions are the culmination of the new strategy and plan of action being pursued by the Government of Israel to pre-empt the provisions of the accords reached, to back away from obligations, to expedite settlement activities, to seize and annex more Palestinian land and displace more Palestinians, to disassociate itself from the land-for-peace principle and to shift towards inadmissible notions that seek security for Israel through territorial expansion, irrespective of the cost or the consequences.

The final communiqué adopted by the Arab summit meeting held at Cairo last June endorsed the peace process as a strategic choice anchored in international treaties, Security Council resolutions, the Madrid formula and the principle of land for peace. Therefore, no one should be surprised at the angry reaction now unfolding following the discovery by the Arab and the Muslim nations, as well as the international community, that the policies of extremism are supplanting reason and vision and that oppression and aggression are replacing legally binding obligations and signed agreements.

Therefore, while Kuwait condemns these grave Israeli measures that may well destroy the peace process, it calls upon the Security Council to adopt without delay a draft resolution to force Israel to close the tunnel and to reverse all actions and practices that have led to these highly volatile situations. We also call upon the Council to fulfil its responsibility regarding the restoration of the peace process and to put it back on track by a reversal of the Israeli designs so as to avoid a return to the cycle of tensions and fighting. The Council should also reaffirm its previous relevant resolutions and its backing of the accords reached in order to safeguard the peace process and to halt its drift towards collapse.

It is our fervent hope that reason and wisdom will prevail with the unanimous adoption of a draft resolution that reflects the sensitivity and significance of the current situation and displays the Council's sense of determination to fulfil its obligations in regard to the maintenance of international peace and security. Such a draft resolution would demonstrate the response of the Council *vis-à-vis* actions that undermine peace. A collective and unanimous position on the part of the Council would demonstrate in no uncertain terms its resolve and will. The Council should not allow the aspirations of peoples for just and comprehensive peace to evaporate as a result of an aggressive drive by Israel which, if left unchecked, would bring about wide-scale destruction and despair.

To be attained and maintained, viable peace requires justice and equity based on the rule of international law as embodied by the Council. Equally, it requires courage and bold initiative. The Council is undoubtedly duty-bound to fulfil its role towards that end.

The President (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, His Excellency Mr. Datuk Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi. I welcome him, and I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Abdullah (Malaysia): Malaysia is deeply disturbed by the new eruptions of violence in the occupied Arab territory of Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. This dangerous situation has been brought about by the irresponsible and blatant act of provocation by the Israeli authorities in opening a tunnel in the immediate vicinity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem and in

permitting the observance of Jewish religious rites in the Holy Sanctuary of Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Their act of violating the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Al-Haram Al-Sharif has not only undermined the peace process and led to loss of life, it has inflamed anger and outraged Muslims throughout the world.

We condemn this blatant act of provocation by Israel. We call upon Israel to respect the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Al- Haram Al-Sharif and to rescind its decision and close the tunnel. We also deplore the closure of Jerusalem to the Palestinians imposed by Israeli authorities, which would exacerbate the hardship of the population living in those areas.

Malaysia considers that the measures taken by Israel to create new demographic facts and to change the status of Jerusalem are illegal, invalid and in contravention of relevant Security Council resolutions on the position of the international community and on the status of Jerusalem.

Malaysia reaffirms its total commitment to and unwavering support for the Palestinian people and its leadership in the attainment of all their inalienable rights to exercise self-determination and to establish an independent State.

Regrettably, since the election of the new Israeli Government under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the peace process has taken a new turn. Announcements made by the Likud Government that it is not to be bound by the peace agreements signed by the former Israeli Labour Government and the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Netanyahu's decision to rule out any compromise on Jerusalem or a Palestinian State, the long-delayed redeployment of Israeli soldiers from Hebron and the departure from the land-for-peace principle have threatened the Middle East peace process. In our view, the decision of the Israeli Government to approve the expansion of Jewish settlements and the seizure of Palestinian land will only complicate the peace process.

The present Israeli Government must honour all peace agreements into which Israel has entered with the Palestinian Authority. Any departure from those agreements by the Israeli Government would destroy all hopes of achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace between Palestine and Israel. The Israeli Government should not attempt to create new realities on the ground and impose new conditions before resuming negotiations. It should also refrain from placing new obstacles to the peace process. Malaysia would like to urge the United States, which has invested so much effort in the latest peace process, earnestly to encourage Israel to honour its commitments to the peace agreements.

Malaysia strongly believes that the momentum towards a successful peace process in the Middle East must be maintained. The climate of suspicion must be immediately replaced with new faith in peace. Any attempts to shatter the peace process would only aggravate instability and bring about renewed violence and destruction, which must be avoided at all costs.

The President (*interpretation from French*): Before calling on the next speaker, I should like to inform the Council that I have just received letters from the representatives of Argentina, Costa Rica, the United Arab Emirates and Mauritania, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Di Tella (Argentina), Mr. Berrocal Soto (Costa Rica), Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed (Mauritania) and Mr. Al-Noaimi (United Arab Emirates) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, His Excellency Mr. Moustapha Niasse. I welcome him, and I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Niasse (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): First, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. We consider it a tribute to the entire continent of Africa and to your country, Guinea-Bissau, which is close to Senegal. I should also like to congratulate you on the outstanding way in which you have been discharging your task — a sensitive one, especially in the present circumstances that are the reason for our meeting. I take great pleasure in expressing these sentiments, as you are the son of a brotherly and friendly country, an immediate neighbour of Senegal with whom

our Government and people have always enjoyed privileged and multifaceted relations.

The prevailing situation in Jerusalem is more than alarming. The numerous casualties that have occurred in that city every day during the deplorable confrontations between Israelis and Palestinians have plunged the Middle East into tensions that the peace process launched at the Madrid Conference seemed to have removed from this region forever.

These confrontations, which are the concern of the entire world, are all the more grievous in that they are taking place in a city that was the birthplace of sublime messages, proclaiming love for one's neighbour, that have been transmitted through the centuries by the three revealed religions that share the same cradle — Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Jerusalem, which, etymologically, means "city of peace" should, be the focus, today more than ever, of all the efforts made by the Palestinian and Israeli leaders, as well as by the international community over the past few years, to create, maintain, consolidate and expand a dynamic of lasting peace in the Middle East.

It is therefore regrettable that Jerusalem's original mission continues to be betrayed almost every day. In particular, the events taking place there today are the result of practices that the United Nations, in several relevant resolutions, has condemned in an attempt to end, especially those aimed at changing the demographic, historical and cultural status of that Holy City, which is an international city.

The decision leading to the opening by the Israeli occupier of a tunnel in the area of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holy site of Islam, was far from wise if we measure its impact by the amount of blood that has been shed over three days in Jerusalem and by the many additional obstacles to the Israeli-Arab peace process that it has caused.

My country, Senegal, following the example of the international community, condemns that action and solemnly appeals to the Israeli Government to modify its position on the peace process and to take unequivocally into account the hopes that the entire world had placed on the establishment of dialogue between Israel and the Arabs — a dialogue that we have hailed and supported. This is an appeal designed to be constructive, made by a country that everyone knows has relations with both parties: Israel and the Palestinian State.

This is an opportunity for my country to reaffirm its support for all United Nations resolutions on the problem of the Middle East and the question of Palestine in particular. This question is at the heart of this critical issue, whose resolution hinges on the establishment of an independent State for the Palestinian people. This reaffirmation is perfectly understandable for Senegal, which has presided over the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People since the creation of that body.

Senegal's Head of State, President Abdou Diouf, has always devoted particular attention to the problem of the Middle East in all its aspects and dimension. Senegal believes that, despite the difficulties inherent in any attempt to build peace on a foundation of long-standing passions, we should not throw up our hands in the face of the uncertainty which, for some time, has been part of the search for a peaceful and lasting solution to this issue.

We base this conviction, which we are honoured to express here, not only on the determination of the international community, under United Nations auspices, not to let slip all the hopes born of the agreements concluded since 1993 between Israel and the Palestinians and certain other Arab countries. But we base it above all on the existence, in Israel as in the Arab world, of a majority opinion in favour of peace. We know that to be true. That is a major advantage and takes us farther from the long-standing passions of the past to a new situation that falls within the framework of changes experienced by the world in the past few years.

Let all peace-loving countries and nations ensure that this reality is strengthened, instead of allowing it to dissolve in the continuation of practices inspired by extremism, whatever its origin.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the representative of Senegal for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, Mr. Habib Ben Yahia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ben Yahia (Tunisia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, I am pleased to extend to you, Sir, our sincerest congratulations on your assumption of

the presidency of the Council for this month. I am certain that, with your diplomatic skill and wide experience, you will guide our deliberations with success.

The Council is meeting today in an emergency situation to consider the volatile situation in the occupied Arab territories in Jerusalem and a number of Palestinian cities, where bloody events have erupted, killing and wounding a large number of civilians. The situation is still escalating and widening and, ominously, may lead to the worst possible circumstances.

The Israeli authorities opened a tunnel under the western wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in East Jerusalem. That action provoked the feelings of the Palestinian people as well as the Arab and Islamic worlds. This represents a menace, as the Mosque is the first of the two *kiblahs* and the third holy shrine, and it is a step in the direction of undermining all the Islamic sites and represents the judaization of the Holy City.

This measure attempts to change the legal status of Jerusalem, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, flouts the resolutions of the Security Council and ignores the agreements concluded between Israel and the Palestinian authority, agreements that stipulated that the status of Jerusalem would be the subject of final-status negotiations.

If Israel were to persist in changing the demographic composition of the city and in demolishing Palestinian houses under flimsy pretexts — it even went so far as to discourage visitors from seeing Orient House — this would be another attempt to impose a *fait accompli*, which would render any negotiation meaningless. Opening the tunnel is, as a matter of fact, a link in a series of decisions whose objectives are well known. It is a part of a comprehensive policy that has become very clear in the few months since the new Israeli Government took office. In this very short time, the Israeli authorities have embarked on the expansion of settlements and made arrangements to build a number of housing compounds in the western Strip. They have also persisted in the siege of Palestinian cities and the starvation of the Palestinian people, as well as in cutting off their livelihoods.

Can these practices be considered reflections of a genuine desire to turn over a new leaf and start a new relationship between the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples that is based on a mutual recognition of the right of each to independence, dignity and security? What we have witnessed today is a return to the logic of brute force and a retreat from the spirit of peace. It is a return to intransigence in imposing a *fait accompli* without any regard for the resolutions of this body or for public opinion. All our expectations are being fulfilled now. The Israelis are reneging on all their security commitments.

In the absence of security, there can be no justice. Security without peace is false and impossible. Security is the result of justice and equity, not of tyranny and the usurping of the rights of people. The world was heartened by the launching of the peace process and applauded the agreements of Oslo, Washington and Cairo as steps on the right path to restore the legitimate national rights of the Palestinians, to recognize their right to self-determination, and to permit the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in accordance with the resolutions of international law.

Tunisia is a peace-loving country. It supported the peace process, which was based on land for peace. We are expressing today our full solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people. We would draw attention to the danger of the current developments, as they will jeopardize the peace process. We call upon the Council — in particular the sponsors of the peace process — swiftly to move to put an end to any Israeli practices that run counter to the spirit and the letter of all the agreements that have been reached within the framework of this process in order to avert any escalation of this crisis, which might have a negative impact on all the countries and peoples of the region, as well as on the peace and security of the entire world.

We call upon Israel today to reconsider its practices and its arbitrary policies, and to renounce any actions that could impede efforts towards peace. Israel must cease all interference with the holy sites and put an end to the establishment of settlements and the siege of Palestinian towns. We also call upon Israel to honour its commitments within the framework of the agreements, to return to the negotiating table with the serious political will to implement a settlement that accords with the principles of international law, and to completely withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territories, the Syrian Golan and southern Lebanon as part of establishing a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

The gravity of the situation in the Palestinian territories requires rapid and decisive intervention by the Council in order to force Israel to take immediate measures to rectify the situation before it is too late. This means Israel must close the tunnel forever, immediately

halt all aggression against civilians, and respect its commitments in a way that guarantees progress towards the peace to which we all aspire.

The President *(interpretation from French)*: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia for his kind words addressed to me. The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada, His Excellency the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy. I welcome him, and I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Axworthy (Canada) *(interpretation from French)*: The escalation of violence this week in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza has deeply shaken Canadians. We are very much alarmed by the number of Palestinians and Israelis who have lost their lives in recent days, and we would like to extend our condolences to the families of those who have been killed or wounded.

We are extremely concerned also about the future of the peace process in the Middle East. A lasting peace can be based only on confidence.

(spoke in English)

The tragic events of this week and the tensions of the past months have served to shatter the trust that has been so painstakingly built up over many years, a trust vital to the success of the peace process. Restoring that trust must be the very first priority. In the meantime, a terrible price has been paid in human suffering, and we must all acknowledge that.

We know that nothing is to be gained from apportioning blame. We hope that out of the present suffering, Israelis and Palestinians alike will agree that violence is not the answer. We issue an urgent appeal for leaders throughout the region to do all in their power to restore calm and bring the violence to an immediate end. We all need to support these leaders, and accept that there is only one road, and that is the road of peace. We call on Israeli and Palestinian leaders to return to the negotiating table in the coming days and we very much hope that Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat will soon meet.

Both parties can demonstrate their commitment to peace by honouring and fully implementing the existing agreements on Palestinian autonomy. We would like to see the start of serious negotiations between the Syrian and Lebanese Governments, and the Israeli Government.

What is critical now is avoiding any further measures that will provoke further violence and suffering. We urge the Government of Israel to reverse its decision to open a new entrance to the Hasmonean tunnel, and we, too, deeply regret the recent demolition of the Palestinian community centre. The Israeli Government must move forward with speedy and substantive steps to implement the Oslo agreements, as it has said it intends to do. We urge the Israeli Government to demonstrate that commitment by avoiding any further initiatives to change the status quo on matters subject to permanent-status negotiations. Expanding existing Israeli settlements, or ill-considered actions in Jerusalem or elsewhere, are not appropriate steps in this climate. We urge the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel to exercise maximum calm and restraint in the prevention of violence.

It is vital that confidence be restored and that Israelis and Palestinians alike see that there is a real commitment to the serious and early implementation of those agreements. Unilateral actions cannot resolve these very sensitive questions; only negotiations can. Our goal is a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on the principles laid out in United Nations Security Council resolutions over a generation — notably 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

It is also true that the international community has a responsibility to the peace process in the Middle East. We must ask ourselves today if we are prepared to continue the struggle for peace and if we are doing all that every member here can possibly do. It is our duty to speak out in the cause of peace and to consider, as members of the international community, any initiatives that would aid the parties to build confidence, such as a renewal of the Madrid process.

Canada's involvement in the efforts to secure peace in the Middle East dates back almost 50 years. My predecessor, the late Lester B. Pearson, received a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts during the Suez crisis in 1956. Since that time, Canada has contributed to every United Nations peace-keeping operation in the Middle East.

Canadians do not want to see the accomplishments of the last several years destroyed. Our active involvement in the peace process has helped, along with that of many others, to build peace. We have accepted the challenge of chairing the refugee Working Group. We have and will continue to support the economic development of the region, including direct aid to the

Palestinians. We urge all parties to continue preparations for the third North Africa and Middle East economic summit in Cairo in November, building on the successes of those held in Casablanca and Amman.

The Madrid Conference in 1991 heralded a new era in the Middle East. Since then, we have seen leaders of exceptional courage step forward and accept the challenge of building peace in the Middle East. Those foundations of peace have been painstakingly built, often with great sacrifice. Let us ensure they are preserved and the deliberations of this Council today are a very important start for that rebuilding to take place.

The President: *(interpretation from French)*: The next speaker is the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Yemen, Mr. Abdulkarim Al-Eryany. I welcome him and invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al-Eryany (Yemen) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: I would like to thank you, Sir, for giving me the opportunity to address the Security Council on such a very important question for our region. At the outset, I would like to offer you my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. Allow me to express my hope that the work of the Council will be crowned with success under your wise leadership. I would also like to pay tribute to your predecessor for the excellent manner in which he conducted the work of the Council during the past month.

The Security Council meets today to discuss very complicated and dangerous developments in the Middle East. Recent tragic events have led to the explosion of the situation in Jerusalem and other Palestinian cities and towns, and the situation continues to evolve as we speak. All this has come about as the result of the oppressive, unjust practices of the Israeli authorities against the Palestinian population and their continued attempts to change the features of Jerusalem. The latest such attempt was the opening of an entrance to the tunnel, which threatens the integrity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and other holy sites. In recent days, the Israeli army has used live ammunition and other weapons against defenceless civilian Palestinians. These clashes have led to the death and injury of hundreds of innocent Palestinians. We condemn and denounce the measures taken by the Israeli authorities and Israel's repeated aggression against Palestinians and Palestinian officials in Arab Jerusalem and other Palestinian cities and towns.

These oppressive measures represent blatant violations of human rights and of resolutions of international legality, as well as the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. This dangerous situation could aggravate tensions in the area and return it to a cycle of violence that might threaten peace and security in the Middle East.

We view the Israeli practices in Jerusalem as a clear and flagrant violation of the Israeli-Palestinian accords, which provide for negotiations on these territories to determine their final status. These violations threaten the peace process and the Israeli Government bears the responsibility for these dangerous developments. The Security Council must adopt all the measures necessary to stop Israeli practices against the defenceless, innocent Palestinians. We call upon the international community, and the permanent members of the Security Council, and the two sponsors of the peace process in particular, to intervene promptly and urgently to stop the bloodshed and the killing of defenceless civilians; all measures and practices which desecrate holy places; all oppressive measures adopted by Israel against the Palestinian people; the confiscation of property and land belonging to the Islamic and Christian *awqaf*; and the attempt by Israel to change the features and demographic composition of Jerusalem.

Based on the Yemeni Republic's ongoing commitment to a comprehensive, lasting and just peace in the area based on resolutions of international legality and legitimacy and the principle of "land for peace", we wish to reaffirm the importance that we place on the need for Israel to respect the accords signed and all resolutions of international legality and legitimacy, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

The President *(interpretation from French)*: I thank the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Yemen for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, His Excellency Mr. Alexander Downer. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Downer (Australia): The violent events which have taken place in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza during the last three days have deeply shocked the Australian Government and people. I want immediately to take the opportunity offered by this open meeting of

the Council to express Australia's sympathy to the families of all those injured and killed. Clearly, there is great frustration in the areas where this violence has occurred. The only enduring answer that can be given to that frustration is peace. Peace must be pursued with vigour and must be accompanied by serious attempts to eliminate fundamental sources of injustice and to spread the message of tolerance.

Australia calls upon the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to do everything in their power to stop the violence. They should ensure that no steps are taken which further provoke violence.

Australia strongly supports the Madrid process because it offers the best prospects for the achievement of a just and secure peace in the Middle East. In this context, we also call on all parties to honour the obligations and commitments they have made, including by commencing substantive talks on final status issues and the redeployment of forces. All parties should recommit themselves to the search for a peaceful resolution of their differences. They must resume direct dialogue. The promise to negotiate solutions was given. Those negotiations must not be stalled or avoided. It is only through such steps that progress towards forging a durable peace and securing the future welfare of both the Israeli and Palestinian people can be restored.

The President *(interpretation from French)*: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Jordan, His Excellency Mr. Khaled Madadha. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Madadha (Jordan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I extend to you, Mr. President, our thanks for your rapid response in convening this emergency meeting, which is very important for this Council. I also take this opportunity to extend our congratulations to you on assuming the presidency of the Council for this month.

The swift, bloody events that have taken place in the self-rule areas and the occupied territories, which have left dozens of people dead or wounded, have confirmed that the peace process has reached a serious and crucial stage. This Council must take appropriate decisions and steps to deal with this crucial situation.

Since the outset, the Government of Jordan has welcomed the resolve shown by the Israeli people in choosing their newly elected Government. We have opened channels of communication with them and even called on them to cooperate with all concerned parties in order to resume the peace process, in accordance with the Madrid Conference and the ensuing agreements based on the land-for-peace formula and Security Council resolutions, in the hope that a just and lasting peace can be established and that through dialogue a number of slogans and negative and unrealistic statements from the election campaign can be put to rest. We believe that the reality and responsibility of governance require more positive and realistic attitudes.

Our position during the Arab Summit in Cairo in June 1996 was that we should look beyond these slogans and give the new Israeli Government time to define its position with regard to the peace process.

In the last three months, His Majesty King Hussein and the Jordanian Government have made persistent efforts and continued dialogue to urge the Israeli President and his Government to return to the framework of the Madrid Conference and to halt any steps that could divert us from this framework. We have also warned that continued settlement activities, the demolition of houses, confiscation of territories, displacement of the population, closure of autonomous areas, aggravated problems of economy and living conditions and the confiscation of identity cards could not fail to lead to desperation, misery, violence and tension. We also warned of the gravity of desecrating holy places and Al-Quds. We agreed to defer any final-status negotiations related to this.

We have asked our partners in the peace process not to procrastinate with regard to the implementation of what we have agreed.

The serious and bloody events that have taken place recently have confirmed our apprehensions. They came as no surprise to us. Opening the tunnel was a spark that ignited these bloody confrontations. We have listened with great attention to the statements made by the Heads of delegations before this Council, which contained a number of positive points that may also be included in a draft resolution to be adopted by the Council to deal with this crisis.

The most important provisions of such a draft resolution are to calm the situation, close the tunnel and establish an international fact-finding committee, as proposed by His Majesty the King, to determine how to deal with the desecration of the archaeological sites in Jerusalem, particularly since there are international

resolutions clearly stating that the holy shrines are inviolable. It is also important for the draft resolution to call for a clear Israeli commitment to implement expeditiously all the agreements, particularly on the withdrawal from Hebron, thus paving the way to negotiations on the final status.

The same draft resolution must include measures to rectify the situation so that these dangerous events do not occur again.

We call upon the Israeli Government to resume peace negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, starting from the point where they were stalled, and to take rapid measures to lift the siege of the closed areas so as to alleviate the economic problems facing the Palestinian people.

The peoples of our region, who yearn for peace, are calling on us to make serious efforts to resume the work that started in Madrid. We Arabs and Israelis must rise to the expectations of all those peoples in order to achieve a just and lasting peace based on the principles we agreed on, so that our children and grandchildren will in future enjoy their lives in stability.

The President *(interpretation from French)*: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, His Excellency Mr. Farouk Al-Shara. I welcome him, and I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al-Shara (Syrian Arab Republic) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: Allow me at the outset to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month.

Let me take advantage of my presence in New York for the fifty-first session of the General Assembly to set out in detail the position of my country, Syria. The Security Council is meeting in the wake of the events that took place in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Syria is a direct party to the peace process. It has affirmed and reaffirmed that its option for peace is a strategic one. My country played a major role in the Madrid Conference and in opening the way for a comprehensive peace process, for the first time in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

I could say that the international efforts made to hold the Madrid Conference, the discussions and deliberations that preceded the Conference to enable all to reach agreement on the basis and rules for that Conference, and the agreement by Syria in particular at that time to take part, led for the first time to talk of peace in the area after a decades-long conflict.

The opening of an entrance to the tunnel, which led to this bloodshed, symbolizes closing the door to peace. Wrong are those who believe that the issue is the opening of an entrance to tourists so that they do not have to walk as far; wrong are those who believe that this was the reason the tunnel entrance was opened.

As I have said, and as many in our region and in the world — those who follow the peace process — know, the new Israeli Government came to power with a strategy that has absolutely nothing to do with peace. It is perfectly obvious, from the first day it assumed power until the day when the entrance to the tunnel was opened, that the Israeli Government, regrettably, does not have a strategy for peace. The Israeli policy aims at burying the peace process by various means.

Those who have followed the statements, declarations and practices of the Israeli Government since it took power approximately 100 days ago know that the Israeli Government does not miss a chance to tell everyone that it tries to change the rules of the game for the peace process and that it is committed to intransigent positions that reject the principle of land for peace. It declares unequivocally that it will not withdraw from occupied Arab territories, that it will not withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan or from East Jerusalem, and that it wishes to resume and encourage settlement of the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan. The Israeli Government does not care much for the accords, agreements or commitments reached in earlier negotiations, during the term of the previous Israeli Cabinet.

The events that have unfolded over the past two days clearly reflect the tragedy of the Palestinian people. They reflect the fact that this people will not surrender. They will not be an easy victim of the occupation and the settlement policy. No matter how many attempts are made to derail the peace process or to diminish its role, the Palestinian people will accept nothing less than their legitimate right to self-determination and to the restoration of all their occupied territories to the boundaries of 4 June 1967.

We in Syria will not give up our strategic option for peace. We will accept nothing less than a full withdrawal

from the Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967. We believe that the Israeli Government is trying to renege on commitments and pledges made by the previous Israeli Government. In our opinion and in world opinion, these commitments and pledges represent a fundamental basis for the resumption of negotiations on all tracks. If the Israeli Government is not going to commit itself to the implementation of commitments and pledges made by the previous Government, it is basically telling us and the whole world that we should not believe that it will enter into any new commitment or respect any old one, in accordance with resolutions of international legality and legitimacy and the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference.

How can any Arab party resume peace negotiations without such commitments and pledges? And in an atmosphere such as the one in which we live today, fraught with danger, we cannot help feeling that we are returning to the law of the jungle, rather than living in a world of respect for international law, international legitimacy and the resolutions of the Security Council.

I regret that I have had to go into such detail, but I must also tell the Council that what is happening now must be a warning to us all that the peace process faces a real threat. The peace process is dying. The peace process might be buried and we might not have another such opportunity as we have had to implement a comprehensive, just peace in the Middle East.

Arrogance and intransigence do not make peace. Israel today is acting with unprecedented intransigence and arrogance. Israelis believe that the Arabs are helpless and that, with its old means of force and power, with all its weapons of mass destruction, foremost among which are the nuclear option and a huge arsenal of advanced weaponry, Israel does not have to comply with international law, Security Council resolutions nor even the principles of international legality.

The Security Council, which is charged with maintaining international peace and security, is called upon today more than ever before to adopt whatever decision it considers necessary and appropriate to revive the peace process and put it back on track. It is called upon to condemn the bloody practices of the Israeli authorities in the occupied Palestinian territories. It is called upon to put an end to these events of bloodshed, these painful and tragic events.

Consequently, regarding the question of the tunnel, the prelude to evil, we believe that, important as it is, we should not confine ourselves to discussing that particular question. Rather, this Council should adopt the appropriate resolution to rescue the moribund peace process, the area and the region from more violence and tension that benefit no one.

In conclusion, I would like to apologize for going into such detail, but I would like to state that all Arab countries, in a single voice and at two conferences — first at the summit conference and then at the Foreign Ministers' conference — have all said that peace is a strategic option for the Arabs, but that it is unacceptable that it not be a strategic option for Israel. It would be a real catastrophe and a real tragedy if it were not.

The European summit conference that took place in Florence and the industrial summit that took place in Lyons reaffirmed the basis for the peace process and the principles of that process, which are based on Security Council resolutions and the principle of "land for peace". It is high time that Israel realized that it will not be able both to achieve peace and keep the occupied territories. It must choose. And that choice is for Israel to return the occupied territories taken by force to their rightful owners and to respect its commitment so that we can re-open the road of the peace process. That choice is desired not only by the people of the area, but by the whole world.

The President *(interpretation from French)*: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Morocco, His Excellency Mr. Abdelatif Filali.

His Excellency Mr. Abdelatif Filali, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Morocco, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President *(interpretation from French)*: I welcome the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Morocco and invite him to make his statement.

Mr. Filali (Morocco) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish on behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. We are certain that the work of the Council will be crowned with success thanks to your diplomatic skill. I wish also to convey our congratulations to your

predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Germany, on his presidency of the Council last month.

The Security Council is meeting as Palestine faces a grave, explosive situation that jeopardizes everything that has been achieved since the Madrid Conference. Everyone expected that the Israeli provocation and aggression over the past two days would result in bloodshed and innocent victims. Today's situation is the consequence of the Israeli Government's closure of Gaza and the West Bank, imposed upon Palestinians living there, its rebuff of the peace agreements reached with the Palestinian Authority, and its decision to pursue its policy of expansion into occupied Palestinian territories, in addition to the continuing provocations carried out by the Israeli police and army against the Palestinian people.

Since the 1970s and even before, my country has always been in the vanguard of States participating in the peace process. My country has taken innumerable initiatives to bring about a just, lasting and equitable peace that would ensure the rights of all and that would be universally respected. We welcomed the Madrid Conference, which was based on the same principles and foundations that underpin our foreign policy with respect to the Israeli-Arab conflict in general and to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in particular. We welcomed the Oslo Agreement and travelled to Washington, D.C., to participate in the signing ceremony for the agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians sponsored by the United States and the Russian Federation.

Like all other States, we were optimistic about the peace process based on the Oslo Agreement, which laid down the principles of land for peace and respect for the rights of all parties to the conflict.

We supported all these initiatives, and have used every possible diplomatic, political and other means to help realize them, in the conviction that the dawn of a just and lasting peace was at hand despite the length of the negotiations. But then the Government of Benjamin Netanyahu came to power and all of that came to an end. There was retreat from all the principles unanimously approved by the participants in the Madrid Conference, including Israel itself. Negotiations on all matters hit obstacles, and the new Israeli Government began to drain the Oslo agreement of its content and significance. That was the first time a Government based on principles of democratic succession had refused to honour international commitments undertaken by the previous Administration — which is contrary to the principles of democracy and to international norms.

We cannot fail to deplore and reject this situation, and vigorously and urgently to appeal to the Israeli Government to honour its commitments under conventions and agreements concluded, to bring about a just, lasting and equitable peace with the Palestinian Authority and with its Arab neighbours.

Yesterday His Majesty King Hassan II, as President of the seventh Islamic Summit Conference and as Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and on behalf of the Islamic world, addressed a letter to the Secretary-General deploring the provocations carried out by Israel towards Arabs and Muslims in flagrant violation of all international resolutions calling for safeguarding the character of the Holy City of Jerusalem. Those actions are aimed at creating a new situation in defiance of everything that was agreed at the Madrid Conference and in agreements between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, in particular with respect to the ultimate status of the city of Jerusalem. His Majesty the King requested the Secretary-General to circulate that letter as a document of the General Assembly at its fifth-first session and of the Security Council, with a view to urging the international community to shoulder its responsibility to ensure that the rule of law prevails, to challenge any action that infringes upon legitimate Islamic rights and laws, and to respond to the Israeli policy of imposing a *fait accompli* by force. That Israeli policy can only lead to stalemate and return the region to the old cycle of instability and violence.

It is the responsibility of the Security Council to demand that Israel respect and honour all agreements into which, before the recent elections, it entered with the other parties concerned.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Morocco for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the Secretary-General of the People's Committee for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, His Excellency Mr. Omar Mustafa Muntasser. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Muntasser (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish at the outset to

congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. I am confident that your personal qualities and diplomatic skill will enable you to guide the work of the Council to success. I wish also to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Tono Eitel, Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, for the successful way in which he conducted the work of the Security Council last month.

Once again, the world, including the Security Council, is witnessing the Palestinian people being massacred, as they have been for the past 50 years, by the terrorist aggressors, the Israelis, a brutal force confronting a defenceless people mortally wounded and drained of its life-blood.

The Zionist usurpers have established their Zionist entity and pursued a policy of displacement. They have been supported in this by a number of countries, foremost among which is the United States of America, which has supported terrorism and aggression against the Arabs and Muslims, forgetting its important role as a super-Power and a permanent member of the Security Council, which is the depository of the hopes of all peoples for justice and fairness.

The responsibility for the massacres and genocide being perpetrated right now against the Palestinian people should be borne by the United States, which wholeheartedly supports the Israelis. The Israelis kill the Palestinians as if they were lambs, displacing them from their homes, their gardens and their houses. This shameful crime against humanity does not move the conscience of the largest country in the world, which ignores it completely and at best appeals to both parties to exercise restraint.

Do we not have the right to ask the Council exactly what it means when it appeals to both parties, both the victim and the aggressor, to exercise self-restraint? All its members know that this cannot serve the maintenance of international peace and security. The settler occupation is expanding day after day, in spite of the resolutions of this Council. The prisons are filled with Palestinians, houses are demolished for the flimsiest of reasons and the holiest of places are being desecrated and trampled upon daily. And now we see measures aimed at demolishing these holy places and we hear irresponsible statements every day. The Palestinians exercise absolutely no right to establish their independent State and absolutely no thought is given to a withdrawal from the Golan, except after hundreds of years. The Palestinians enjoy absolutely no rights in Jerusalem. Tunnels are opened under the Al-Aqsa Mosque in preparation for its demolition. The attacks are aimed not only against occupied territories, but also at the autonomous areas, including Gaza. Despite all of this, the Council talks of peace. What peace? The peace of the killer and the victim, of the lamb and the wolf? The peace of terrorists equipped with all kinds of weapons — weapons of mass destruction, bacteriological, chemical and nuclear weapons? The displacement of a people that has fallen victim to a conspiracy of the whole world — a portrait of the tragedy of the twentieth century?

We support peace. The only difference between us and others is that we are against surrender and a policy of *fait accompli*. We are for a peace that is just and comprehensive. We have no hatred for Jews. While we are concerned about the interests of the Palestinian people, we are also concerned about those of the Jewish people. Therefore, as we said before, the steps outlined for a so-called peace will not lead to real peace. Real peace must be comprehensive and just to start with. These developments prove our insight: a comprehensive and just peace must include both Palestinians and Jews. This cannot be achieved without the establishment of a disarmed, democratic State, free from bacteriological, nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, in which both Palestinians and Jews could live under a democratic regime supervised by the United Nations, as in South Africa. We are confident that this solution would further the interests of all, and that if it is not followed the tragedy will continue.

The powerful will not remain powerful forever, nor will the weak remain weak. This fact has been seen in all times and will never change. This is the word of God and the word of God cannot be changed.

In conclusion, we would like the Security Council, in addressing this tragic topic today, to assume its responsibility to stop the Israeli aggressors from carrying out their plan to judaize Jerusalem and from committing aggression against the holiest religious sites of Christians and Muslims, and to impose upon Israel a commitment to honour its own pledges and to sit at the negotiating table without arrogance, intransigence or preconditions. A deadline for such negotiations must be determined or else the Council should implement Chapter VII, from which Israel has been exempt for over half a century. We call upon the Council today not to reiterate the same old concern or issue another appeal for restraint. This has never stopped aggression before and has never saved a

victim. Repeating it would only deepen the feeling on the part of Arabs and Muslims that the Security Council has a double standard and is only here to punish Arabs and Muslims.

Right will prevail, even if it takes a long time.

The President *(interpretation from French)*: I thank the Secretary-General of the People's Committee for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya for his kind words addressed to me and to my predecessor.

The next speaker on my list is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, His Excellency Mr. Ali Osman Mohamed Taha. I welcome him and invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Taha (Sudan) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: I would like at the outset to convey through you, Sir, the deepest feelings of sorrow prevailing in the Sudan as a result of the lives that have been lost in Al-Quds Al-Sharif. I take this opportunity, on behalf of the Sudan, to extend our condolences to the families of the bereaved and to wish the wounded a speedy recovery.

No doubt, a comprehensive and just peace is an objective to which the peace-loving nations aspire and which they endeavour to realize based on the principles of justice and equity. Reneging on undertakings and obligations runs counter to the genuine goal of establishing peace and undermines any movement in its direction. The squandering of the chance for a just, comprehensive and permanent peace by the occupation Powers through the practices being pursued in the Arab territories is ample evidence of the weighty contradiction between the realities of occupation and peace.

The measure taken by the Israeli Government in Al-Quds — the opening of a gate to a tunnel under the western wall of Al-Aqsa Mosque in the eastern part of this city and the ensuing violent and bloody suppression of unarmed civilians expressing their opposition to this measure — is a violation of the noblest of sentiments. It also defies all international covenants and civilized human values and runs explicitly counter to the resolutions of this Council relating to the status of Al-Quds.

Undoubtedly you know, Sir, that the Al-Aqsa Mosque enjoys a high status among Muslims all over the world. It is part of Islamic belief, is regarded with love and respect and is linked to ancient and modern history. It constitutes an important part of the heritage and culture of Muslims.

The existence of Jerusalem — Al-Quds — with all its sites that are holy to the followers of the three religions, must be insured as a place dear to believers and as a safe sanctuary where religious tolerance and peace prevail. If the status of Al-Aqsa Mosque is understood, any attempt to change that status explains to us the opposition that was peaceably demonstrated by the Palestinian people in East Jerusalem. This has truly expressed the feelings of all Muslims and Arabs throughout the world.

It might be appropriate in this connection to recall the arson that took place in 1968 at the same Mosque. That event touched the feelings of Muslims all over the world, resulting in their leaders' agreeing to establish a collective, formal entity to represent them. Thus was born the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

These practices will eventually lead to disaster and to catastrophic consequences for the people and countries of the region. They will also have negative repercussions for international peace and security.

Therefore, while we vehemently condemn these Israeli measures and the suppression of unarmed civilians, Sudan — based on its commitment to international covenants and to the agreements reached by the parties concerned — requests the Security Council to discharge its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. We ask that it request Israel to put an immediate stop to these measures, which cause grief to Muslims all over the world. The Security Council must also take specific measures to put an end to aggression against the Palestinian people and to comply fully with human rights covenants.

Sudan, in solidarity with the Palestinian people and their legitimate rights, and as part of its commitment to the resolutions adopted by the Arab summit held last June in Cairo, calls upon the Council to confirm its credibility by implementing all the resolutions adopted on the Israeli-Arab conflict and the decisions of the Madrid Conference, with a view to achieving a comprehensive and just peace on all tracks. This is the sole way to stability and security in the region.

The President *(interpretation from French)*: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Oman, His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdulla. I welcome him, and I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Bin Abdulla (Oman) (*interpretation from Arabic*): We would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council.

The Council is meeting at a time when international peace and security are in jeopardy. Yes, international peace and security are truly endangered, especially as the Holy City of Jerusalem — enshrined by Almighty God and having been visited by the Prophet Mohammed — is witnessing bloodshed. Blood has been shed at the place where the prophets gathered behind Prophet Mohammed, in the presence of Jesus Christ, Moses, Abraham and all the other prophets. We are truly saddened at the events that are taking place in that Holy Land.

We ask Almighty God to accept the martyrs of this Earth, to take them into Heaven and give patience to their families. At the same time, we would like to extend our condolences to the families of those Israelis who were killed. They are also victims of Israel's misguided policy. They too are the victims of a useless policy of aggression and provocation.

You, Sir, are now the highest authority in the international community, and we are meeting today after witnessing the fact that more bloodshed, violence and hatred can be avoided only through a resumption of the peace process. That path to peace was supported by the international community at the Madrid Conference, and great efforts and resources were expended on it, with a view to reaching agreement between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.

This morning I heard the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel say that Israel does not agree to any preconditions. Israel is committed to those preconditions. Those are the agreements that the State of Israel has committed to through its previous Government. This morning Mr. Farouk Kaddumi summarized for the Council how these agreements have been reneged on. Now, the issue is in the hands of the Security Council, whose five permanent members have the authority and the ability to adopt resolutions.

This morning, the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs presented some ideas and proposals for dealing with the situation. The Council could adopt those ideas and proposals. It is up to the Council to ask Israel to reconsider its policy.

This is about a tunnel that has existed for two thousand years. Generations upon generations have passed through that Holy Land and the tunnel has never been a source of hatred or bloodshed. What is its importance today? Do we need it? Have we come together here to talk about a tourist attraction? The tunnel leads to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, one of the holiest Muslim sites. Are members of the Council aware of the Muslim belief that those who perish in defending that Holy Land are martyrs and ascend directly to heaven? We are dealing here with a serious and delicate issue.

If members of the Council are unable to reach agreement on a draft resolution urging Israel to reverse its policy, which is within the power and competence of the Council to do, they can at the very least give advice.

I do not believe that one can deny the Palestinian people their legitimate right to self-defence, a right that is enshrined in the United Nations Charter. When they come out to demonstrate their rejection of the actions taken by the Israeli Government — and I say "the Israeli Government", not the people of Israel — they are exercising the legitimate right of self-defence.

In the present instance, where is the democracy about which we hear so much? Is it in behalf of democracy that innocent people are killed and tanks sent into the streets of the Holy City? No, that is not democracy.

I repeat: the Security Council must issue a warning to the Israeli Government. I wish it every success in its task.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Oman for his kinds words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain, His Excellency Shaikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa. I welcome him and invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al-Khalifa (Bahrain)(*interpretation from Arabic*): Permit me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on behalf of the delegation of the State of Bahrain, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security

Council for this month. We hope that your efforts in the maintenance of international peace and security will be crowned with success. I should be remiss were I not also to express my appreciation and thanks to your predecessor, Ambassador Eitel of Germany, for his efforts during his presidency of the Council last month.

The State of Bahrain views with deep concern the tragic events that have taken place in the Palestinian territories in recent days. A few days ago, we were surprised at the opening by the Israeli authorities of the tunnel under the historic Islamic sites in occupied Jerusalem in an attempt to judaize the Islamic character of that city. The Israeli measure gave rise to outrage in the Palestinian territories in particular, and in the Islamic world in general, where it was viewed as an act of aggression against the Islamic holy places and an affront to the feelings of Muslims and Arabs.

It is regrettable that the Israeli authorities have dealt with the angry and legitimate reaction in the Palestinian territories in a manner that runs counter to the search for peace in the area. Israeli armed forces have opened fire upon defenceless Palestinians demonstrating against the Israeli action, claiming the lives of scores and injuring hundreds more. We condemn the Israeli policy that has led to the massacre of defenceless Palestinians and we denounce the Israeli measures designed to alter the Islamic character of historic sites.

We call upon Israel to close the tunnel from Baruch Square under the western wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque because it jeopardizes the integrity of the Mosque as well as other Islamic sites in the area. At the same time, we call upon Israel to comply with relevant Security Council resolutions with regard to Jerusalem and with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention concerning occupied territories.

Bahrain, which is anxious to see the peace process in the Middle East continue, supports the statement by the Council of the League of Arab States on 21 September and appeals to the international community, the members of the European Union and the sponsors of the peace process to bring pressure to bear upon Israel to cease its practices designed to judaize the city of Jerusalem and alter its demographic and legal character.

We also call upon the international community to bring pressure to bear upon Israel to change its views on settlements in the Arab territories and to act in a way consonant with the peace process in the area. In that connection, we should like to reaffirm the necessity of pursuing the peace process in the Middle East, convinced as we are that that is the strategic option in that region for the sake of its prosperity, future and peoples. We believe that peace must be based on justice and equity and on the restoration of rights that cannot be denied and on commitments that cannot be withdrawn. Should Israel continue to flout its commitments, to ignore the bases of the peace process, to renege on its promises and pledges entered into within the framework of that process, and to prevaricate and procrastinate over their implementation, that can only lead to a set-back in the peace process and subject the region to a cycle of violence and tension once again.

We call upon this Council to adopt a resolution that will prompt the Israeli Government to stop its oppressive practices against the Palestinian people and to honour the pledges and agreements it has made in the interests of maintaining international peace and security.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain for his kind words addressed to me and my predecessor.

The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr. Ali-Akbar Velayati. I welcome him and invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Velayati (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council.

I wish to express my condolences to the Palestinian people and the bereaved families over the loss of life of the innocent people who have been killed by the Zionist army during the past few days.

Today is a day of mourning for the entire world of Islam and, indeed, for humanity at large. We all witnessed the desecration of Islamic holy places and the indiscriminate massacre of those whose only fault was their religious devotion. Several Muslim worshippers — elderly people, women and children who had gathered in one of the most sacred places in the Islamic world — were murdered just today. Nothing — not even the distorted logic of Zionists and their supporters — can justify this inhuman atrocity and assault on the entire Muslim world. No one can conveniently label peaceful worshippers as terrorists. No one can question the fact that it is a crime against humanity to use helicopter

gunships to attack and murder in cold blood those who had taken refuge in the House of God.

The recent developments in the occupied territories, particularly in Al-Quds al-Sharif and the Islamic sanctuaries, represent the most dangerous escalation of Israel's inhuman behaviour against the Palestinian people.

The deliberate attempt of Israel to undermine the holiest Islamic sites, held in highest reverence by the entire Muslim world, represents an affront to the people of Palestine and the Muslim world in general. It shows a complete disregard by Israel for the basic rules of conduct, to say nothing of the obligations it has undertaken during the past few years. The indiscriminate killing of almost 100 Palestinian civilians, who were protesting blatant acts of aggression against their beliefs and values, constitutes a further illustration of the real face of the Zionist regime disguised behind the facade of peace.

These developments represent yet another step in the long series of intransigent acts on the part of the new Israeli Government that have undermined the very foundations of the so-called peace process, while at the same time exposing the inherent deficiencies of a plan that did not aim to address the real issue in a realistic manner. The reneging by Israel on its commitment to land for peace, the revival of the illegal settlement policy, and now this blatant attempt to change the character of the Holy City of Al-Quds al-Sharif cannot be seen independently. They are elements in the general policy of continued occupation and expansion and the step-by-step imposition of *faits accomplis*.

These policies have met with the indignation of individual members of the international community. However, in the face of these consecutive acts of intransigence, the international community as a whole, particularly as represented in this Council, has been prevented from reacting effectively by certain members motivated by their own domestic agenda.

Such double standards and blind support have given a sense of impunity to the Israeli regime. The worst it can expect in the face of its continued illegal behaviour is simply calls on both sides for restraint. Consequently, the real outcome of the actions of Israel and the muted reactions of the international community has been the consecutive consolidation of the old agenda of further expansion, further settlement and further de-Islamization and de-Arabization of Al-Quds al-Sharif.

It is incumbent upon the Security Council to react resolutely and decisively in the face of crimes being perpetrated by Israel against innocent Palestinians in the occupied territories. Anything less will not only be interpreted by Israel as a green light for more aggression, but will also further undermine the credibility of the Security Council. It is high time for the Council to act. The Islamic world cannot accept further indifference by the Council to the plight of its brethren in Palestine.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Relations, International Trade and Worship of Argentina, Mr. Guido Di Tella. I welcome him and invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Di Tella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, for having convened this emergency meeting without delay. Our participation in this meeting was not expected, but the significance of the events and the concern they aroused in Argentina prompted President Carlos Saúl Menem to call upon me to convey our deep concern.

Nothing that occurs in the Middle East is alien to us because we are linked to that region by close ethnic, religious and cultural ties.

Argentina, a land of immigration, has seen its population nurtured and enriched by citizens of both Arab and Jewish origin. In our territory, communities from the Middle East live side by side harmoniously without distinction of race or creed. Today we wish to join our voice to those of all the Governments that in this debate have made a solemn appeal for the preservation of peace and security on the West Bank, in Gaza and in Jerusalem.

In various forums and on various occasions, my country has lent its support to the shaping of the peace programme that emerged from the Madrid and Oslo agreements and that were widely supported by the international community. The hopes for a lasting peace emerging from that process have now been dimmed by rigid and obstinate attitudes that depart from the letter and the spirit of those agreements.

I wish to express my Government's concern about the extremely serious incidents that have occurred. They are capable of endangering the advance of this process. The security of peoples depends on moderate policies, and certainly not on extreme formulas of any kind. There can be no doubt that the growing instability is playing into the hands of extremist groups who do not wish to see the peace process succeed. Terrorism should never triumph.

We call on all the parties to respect scrupulously the peace agreements that have been signed. It is necessary to restore the requisite conditions for the dialogue that had begun to bear fruit and solidify. It is also imperative to resume the negotiating process. Those who bear the greatest responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security should act with the greatest prudence and even-handedness.

We urge this body, which has ceaselessly sought a peaceful solution in the Middle East, to continue to strive to put an end to the bloodshed and to recreate the conditions needed for dialogue and negotiation. On behalf of the Argentine people and Government, I would also like to express our condolences to all the victims of these tragic events and to their families.

May I conclude with an appeal to all parties to deal with this crisis that has tormented the peoples of the region, and to do so with prudence, moderation and a spirit of tolerance, so as to achieve a lasting peace with justice and security.

The President *(interpretation from French)*: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirate, His Excellency Mr. Al-Noaimi. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al-Noaimi (United Arab Emirates) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: Allow me to extend the congratulations of the United Arab Emirates, Sir, on your presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would like to thank the member States of the Security Council for holding this emergency meeting in order to consider the latest grave developments to take place in Al-Quds as well as in the other occupied Palestinian territories.

These bloody events have erupted as a result of Israel's intransigence in resumption of excavations in Al-Quds al-Sharif and in opening an entrance to the tunnel under the Western Wall of Al-Aqsa Mosque and other Islamic buildings. These are all serious and explicit indications of the constant Israeli endeavours to judaize Al-Quds and to distort and destroy its demographic composition. This is a provocation for the Palestinian people and for all the Muslims and Arabs in the world. The serious, regrettable events that took place in recent days included Israeli army forces firing repeatedly at unarmed Palestinian civilians who were protesting the Israeli measures, resulting in scores of dead and wounded. This came as no surprise. It was part of a premeditated, irresponsible Israeli plan aimed at continuing its policy of *fait accompli* and at consecrating its occupation by force through resort to the practices of oppression, pressure, siege, closure, confiscation, demolition and imprisonment of the Palestinian people, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the agreements between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Israeli Government.

The United Arab Emirates expresses its deepest concern regarding the developments in the occupied Palestinian territories and its regret and disappointment regarding the Israeli Government's policy of reneging on its commitments under the peace agreements between Israel and Palestine — in particular, Israel's commitment to put into effect the principle of land for peace, renounce the policy of settlement, full withdrawal from Hebron and the release of thousands of Palestinian detainees who are still in prison.

We call upon the international community, particularly the sponsors of the peace process, to put pressure on Israel to renounce its aggressive policy and comply with all its commitments, as stipulated in the resolutions of international legality and in conventions. We call upon the Security Council, which is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, to take the appropriate measures to contain this crisis by obliging Israel to permanently — not temporarily — close the tunnel, to put an end to its excavations in the Islamic and Arab sanctuaries, and to return in earnest to the negotiating table with the Palestine Liberation Organization, which is the one and only option for a just and peaceful settlement to the question of Palestine and for the realization of the aspirations of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State just like any other country in the world.

The President *(interpretation from French)*: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, His Excellency Mr. Lemrabott Sidi Mahmoud Ould

Cheikh Ahmed. I welcome him and invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed (Mauritania) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: May I first of all congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I should like to thank you and the other members of the Council for acceding to the request of the Arab Group and for holding this meeting. I should like also to pay tribute to the close ties that bind our two countries. In addition, I should like to acknowledge the exceptional role played by your predecessor, His Excellency the Ambassador of Germany, during his presidency of the Council last month.

The Security Council is meeting today to consider this grave situation, which results from the latest measures taken by the Israeli authorities. These have as their goal, among other things, opening a tunnel under the Haram Al-Sharif in the Holy City of Jerusalem. This is but one link in the chain of provocations and harassment against the Palestinian people, which runs counter to the spirit and the letter of the peace accords concluded by the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel. My country, which condemns these measures, would like to reaffirm here that it is convinced that peace in the Middle East can be just, comprehensive and lasting only if Israel withdraws from the occupied Palestinian territories, including the Arab city of Jerusalem, and if it guarantees to the Palestinian people the right of self-determination as well as its right to an independent State and to exercise it inalienable and legitimate rights. There can be no true peace until Israel withdraws from the Golan and Lebanon.

It is important here to recall the unanimous Arab position, as adopted by the Arab summit in June: that the peace process is a strategic option that requires the same commitment from Israel. That is why Israel must comply with the rules and resolutions underlying the peace process and honour its commitments. In this regard, and in order to overcome current obstacles and guarantee the continuation of the peace process, my country requests the Council to take the necessary steps in dealing with the consequences of the latest decisions taken by the Israeli authorities, and it also asks for a return to the negotiations with regard to Palestinian-Syrian issues and for respect for the principle of land for peace and the principles of other Security Council resolutions.

The Security Council today must discharge its responsibilities in accordance with the United Nations Charter and take the necessary steps to restore all rights to their legitimate holders. Permanent members of the Security Council should also assume their role in ensuring a lasting, equitable and just peace, opening up a new era guaranteeing understanding and cooperation among all the States in the Middle East.

The President *(interpretation from French)*: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania for the kind words he addressed to me.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Brazil in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Amorim (Brazil) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is the representative of Turkey. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Çelem (Turkey): We are dismayed by the turn of events in the Middle East and the lack of progress in the peace process. Turkey has been an ardent supporter of the Middle East peace process from its very beginning. We deem it a unique opportunity that can bring about long-awaited peace and prosperity to the whole region. Much ground has been covered in this direction. The announcement by the new Israeli Government that it was committing itself to the peace process and to continuing to fulfil its pledges according to the Interim Agreement was welcomed by the entire international community. Moreover, the first meeting between Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Arafat, on 4 September 1996, was an encouraging sign for the invigorating of the peace process.

However, the recent impasse in the Middle East peace process has led to the deep concern that the whole process may be interrupted. The momentum must not be

lost. Therefore, any action that may hamper or slow down this process has to be carefully avoided.

In the light of the already charged atmosphere, decisions regarding holy sites and places of worship are particularly susceptible to having wide-reaching implications and creating strong public sensitivities. The decision to open the tunnel under the Al-Aqsa Mosque, in our view, is of that nature. It can obviously have repercussions far beyond the Middle East. Al-Quds Al-Sharif is an equally sacred city for all three monotheistic religions. All interested parties should meticulously respect the delicate harmony and balance that for centuries has permitted the peaceful coexistence in this city of the followers of these three faiths.

It is difficult to understand the reasoning behind the decision of the Israeli Government to abandon today the cautious approach it has displayed in this regard since 1988. We deplore the fact that Israel, instead of adopting a conciliatory attitude, has opted to use force against the Palestinian people protesting this decision. It has been perceived by the Palestinians as a provocation and as a desecration. We do not see any grounds to suspect the sincerity of the reaction of the Palestinians to the decision to open the tunnel at a time when sensitivities were already heightened because of the stagnation of the peace process. This spontaneous reaction has to be taken into consideration. We cannot afford to see the further spread of demonstrations, further bloodshed and further human suffering. We cannot afford to see the Middle East peace process thrown into total disarray.

Information obtained this morning indicates that the situation is even more tense. We call on both sides to exercise restraint and to refrain from actions that may be exploited by parties that are against the peace process. We think that it is vitally important at this juncture that Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Arafat meet immediately to find a way out of this crisis. We call upon the Israeli Government to review its decision concerning the tunnel and to refrain from resorting to the use of force or from any action that can be construed as provocation.

The President (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is the representative of Norway. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Biørn Lian (Norway): The scenes of violence and bloodshed in the Palestinian areas the last few days have shocked and terrified us all, and it is clear that the Middle East peace process is faced with one of its gravest crises since 1993. The violence which has followed the Israeli decision to reopen the old tunnel under the Temple Mount in Jerusalem must also be seen against a background of deep frustration and impatience among the Palestinians at the lack of substantial and visible progress in the peace process in recent months.

The Norwegian Government deeply regrets the tragic loss of lives in the recent violence. It is now of the utmost importance that a further escalation of the conflict be avoided, and that both parties show great restraint and avoid actions that could create further obstacles for a continuation of the peace process.

The Norwegian Government urges both parties immediately to come together at the highest level to discuss how an escalation of the present crisis can be avoided and how substantial discussions on the peace process can be achieved without further delay. We, on our side, have been in direct contact with the two parties to convey this message, and we are prepared to assist the parties in any way they consider appropriate. We are encouraged by the fact that the two parties are in direct contact with each other.

It remains of the utmost importance to start substantial talks on the final-status issues and to reach agreement on Israeli redeployment from Hebron, as stated in the Interim Agreement. Norway is already present in Hebron with close to 40 observers, and we urge the two parties to take the necessary decisions for Israeli redeployment to take place, so that other international observers can be invited by the parties to join the Norwegian advance party in Hebron.

The Israeli Government now has a special responsibility to act to redress and reverse the situation and to ensure that substantial progress can be made in the implementation of existing agreements. We also urge the Israeli Government to bring to an end the border closures which could further aggravate the economic crisis in the Palestinian areas. In view of the current crisis, the Norwegian Government has decided to make an extraordinary contribution of $2 million for budget support to the Palestinian Ministry of Finance. That amount is already being transferred, and as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, Norway is also actively coordinating fund-raising efforts to improve the disbursement of development assistance to the Palestinian Authority.

The President (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is the representative of Japan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Owada (Japan): The clashes in recent days between Palestinians and Israeli troops in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip have aroused profound concern throughout the international community. We in Japan are truly shocked by the recent violence. We extend our condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives and our sympathies to those who have been wounded.

Over the course of the past several months, the international community has been watching the deteriorating situation in the region with a deepening sense of crisis. Prospects for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region have grown increasingly dim. There is a danger that the viability of the peace process can be put in jeopardy. This most recent outbreak of violence is a clear expression of frustration at the lack of improvement in the situation in the occupied Arab territories.

In order to salvage the peace process itself, it is essential that the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority engage without delay in direct talks to bring about a cessation of hostilities. Improvements to the present situation should be carried out through a double-track approach. One task is immediate, and the other a more fundamental approach to the basic issues at the root of the problem.

The immediate task on which action is required is for the parties directly involved to immediately engage in efforts to bridge the chasm of mistrust that separates them by refraining from any action which could do harm to the prospects of the peace process. It is thus essential that they devote themselves to practical confidence-building measures. Japan urges all parties, in particular, to refrain from any action that could provoke further violence. At the same time, on a more fundamental level, it is imperative that the parties directly involved intensify their efforts, in good faith and with steadfast determination, to pursue the peace process in order to restore peace throughout the region. Both sides must summon the courage to take steps to implement, without further delay, the commitments that they have already made in Madrid, in Oslo and thereafter.

Japan has been participating actively in the multilateral talks which have proved to be of great value in facilitating the peace process. We have also been extending assistance to the parties concerned, including assistance to the Palestinians. All these efforts on the part of Japan have been made in the context of our hope that the peace process will be expedited by our cooperation. It is for this reason that Japan has been following the situation as it has evolved in recent months with a growing sense of concern. In fact, on the occasion of the visit of our Foreign Minister, Mr. Yukihiko Ikeda, to the Middle East last August, Japan made an urgent appeal to the parties concerned to engage in direct and ongoing dialogue without delay. He conveyed that same urgent message to Chairman Arafat when he visited Japan in September.

The international community should be seriously concerned at the ominous trend we are witnessing in the occupied Arab territories. Japan, for its part, is determined to contribute in whatever way it can to the creation of an environment conducive to peace. Indeed, it is incumbent upon the international community and its member States to fortify the peace process. Even more critical, however, is the courage, supported by firm political will, of the parties directly concerned. The Government of Japan calls upon them in the strongest possible terms to do everything in their power to resolve the present crisis and, in so doing, to offer the people they represent the hope of a more peaceful and secure future.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Pakistan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan): Since this is the first time I am addressing the Security Council under your presidency, Sir, let me congratulate you on the assumption of your high office. Under your talented and able guidance, the Council has been able successfully to fulfil its responsibilities during the current month.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my admiration for your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Germany, for the excellent manner in which he conducted the affairs of the Council.

It is with a sense of outrage and concern that the Government of Pakistan views the recent action taken by the Israeli Government in opening an entrance to the tunnel extending under the western wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the provocative attempts to permit the observance of Jewish religious rites in the holy sanctuary of Al-Haram al-Sharif. We have been equally shocked to learn about the indiscriminate shooting by Israeli armed

forces of civilian Palestinian demonstrators, resulting in an alarming number of casualties. Pakistan strongly condemns all these actions.

The special significance of the Holy City of Al-Quds al-Sharif for the international community in general and the Islamic Ummah, in particular, requires no further elaboration. These Israeli measures, which are aimed at altering the legal status and demographic composition of Jerusalem, are illegal and invalid.

These provocative Israeli actions have dashed the hopes that the peace process would lead to the early exercise by the Palestinian people of its right to self-determination through the establishment of an independent homeland. This required the complete withdrawal by the Israeli authorities from all the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including the Holy City of Al-Quds al-Sharif.

Pakistan's support for the just struggle for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people is well known. We have consistently stated that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) continue to provide a viable and just framework for a durable and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian question.

It is imperative that the peace process, arrived at through bold and courageous initiatives, should not collapse. We fully share the expectations of the international community that there should be no attempt to derail the implementation of the agreements and accords concluded so far. The provisions of these agreements and accords must be sincerely complied with, both in letter and in spirit. We hope that the new Israeli leadership in Israel will concede to the realities on the ground and resolve all pending issues with the Palestinian national Authority, including the reversal of these recent alarming actions. We strongly urge the demonstration of the requisite flexibility and accommodation, as well as a sincere commitment to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace that will ensure security and stability in the Middle East.

The Government and the people of Pakistan are deeply concerned at these latest actions by the Israeli authorities, which are seriously undermining the peace process. It urges the Security Council to uphold the just position taken by the Palestinians on the issue of Jerusalem, a position which was based on international law and justice. We also call upon the Council not only to take urgent measures to redress the current grave situation, as it imperils the peace of the holy city of Al-Quds al-Sharif, but also to prevent the further deterioration of the situation. We firmly believe that the Council has the duty to call upon the Israeli authorities immediately to end these unjust actions and to desist from taking similar measures in future.

We are confident that the Security Council is conscious of the importance that is attached to Al-Quds al-Sharif by the entire Muslim world and of the dangers inherent in allowing the prevailing resentment to fester.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for his kind words addressed to me and to my predecessor.

(spoke in French):

The next speaker is the representative of Ireland. I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Campbell (Ireland): May I offer you, Sir, our sincere congratulations and good wishes on your assumption of the presidency of the Council.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following associated countries — Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania, Malta, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — have aligned themselves with this statement. Iceland and Liechtenstein also align themselves with this statement.

It is with the utmost dismay that the member States of the European Union learned of the latest grievous outbreaks of violence in Jerusalem and throughout much of the occupied territories. The catalyst for breaking the peace on this occasion was the regrettable opening of a tunnel connecting some of the most sacred and archaeologically important sites in the Holy City. The atmosphere among the Palestinian people has become so charged by the frustration arising from the absence of any real progress in the peace process over recent months that a spark such as this was enough to ignite a wave of violence and destruction.

It is particularly distressing that this violence should be taking place among people whom we had all hoped would increasingly have seen themselves by this stage as active partners in a peace process which has been welcomed throughout the world. The lack of progress in the peace process, together with such decisions as the lifting of the freeze on settlements, the failure to redeploy

Israeli troops from Hebron and the aforementioned incident, are undermining the developing partnership between the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority.

The European Union deplores the killings that have occurred as a result of this latest violence. We also fear the deleterious effect that these events — the most serious since the signing of the Declaration of Principles three years ago — may have on the peace process in the Middle East as a whole. There can be no doubt that the current incidents are a most serious setback to this process, which we all support.

The European Union is committed to its policy on the status of Jerusalem. This policy is based on the view that East Jerusalem is subject to the principles set out in Security Council resolution 242 (1967), notably the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and other Security Council resolutions pertinent to Jerusalem. The European Union further asserts the full applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention in this regard. In particular, the European Union opposes measures by any party which would prejudge the outcome of the permanent status negotiations.

The European Union recalls its statement of only yesterday in which it urged all parties to exercise the utmost restraint and to work to avoid confrontation. Following the most recent loss of lives, it all the more urgently calls upon the leaders of the parties jointly to commit themselves to putting an end to the present violence. At the same time, they should recognize that the only solution is to pursue the current peace process with renewed vigour. It is vital that international confidence be re-established and commitment to the peace process demonstrated.

We renew our call upon Israel to give clear practical demonstration of its confirmed intention to implement fully the agreements already reached and to carry forward the peace process. We stress the crucial importance, for the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace, of the respect for the key principles agreed upon by both parties: self-determination for the Palestinians, with all that that implies, and land for peace.

The Heads of Government of the European Union, at their meeting in Florence last June, reaffirmed that peace in the Middle East is a fundamental interest of the Union. The peace process alone can lead to security and peace for all the countries and peoples of the region. We remain dedicated to our support for this process. We again urge all parties to resume negotiations on the basis of the principles already accepted by both parties in the Madrid and Oslo agreements. We recall, in particular, that it was agreed between the sides that negotiations should include the question of Jerusalem, noting its importance for the parties and the international community, not least the need to respect the established rights of religious institutions. We recall also that the essential principles on which the successful conclusion of negotiations should be based have been enshrined in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

Today the European Union exhorts the parties to refrain from any action which might lead to any further escalation of the violence in the occupied territories. It calls upon their leaders, through their actions and their words, to lead their people back to the path of peace. Personal contact between President Arafat and Prime Minister Netanyahu is clearly essential in the present circumstances. Accordingly, the European Union urges these two leaders to come together with the least delay to resume the dialogue which alone can lead to the peace which their people earnestly seek and deserve.

The President: I thank the representative of Ireland for his kind words addressed to me.

(*spoke in French*)

The next speaker is the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, His Excellency Mr. Abdul Rahman Mansouri. I welcome him and invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mansouri (Saudi Arabia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I would like to congratulate you at the outset, Sir, on your presidency of the Council for this month. You will undoubtedly steer the Council's deliberations with skill, prudence and efficiency.

Recently, the Middle East peace process began with the Madrid Peace Conference with the aim of reaching a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestine question and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Difficult negotiations were held with Israel immediately following the Conference, the first and foremost of which resulted in the Oslo agreement of 1993, which was then followed by other agreements between the Arabs and the Israelis. Some of these agreements are now under implementation. However, Israel unfortunately did not commit itself to the texts of the agreements or to the deadlines. This is the

Palestinian-Israeli trajectory, which is witnessing bloody events in Al-Quds al-Sharif, as have been witnessed in the past in other Palestinian cities. This has undermined the desired march towards peace.

Israeli leaders have advanced the question of security as a pretext for prevarication, hesitation and reneging on the fulfilment of deadlines and stipulations. The Israeli Power occupying the Palestinian-Arab territories continues its serious violations of its commitments, one after another, commitments made in accordance with international law, international humanitarian law and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

On the evening of Monday, 23 September 1996, Israeli authorities, under the protection of army units, opened an entrance to a tunnel in the vicinity of Al-Haram Al-Sharif in occupied East Jerusalem. The tunnel extends approximately 488 metres, parallel to the Western Wall of Al-Aqsa Mosque. The opening of this entrance and any use of the tunnel endanger the security and integrity of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the foundations of the Islamic structures above the tunnel.

The question of Al-Quds al-Sharif, the first of the two *qiblas* and the third holy shrine, is the essence of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the focus of interest for the Arab and Islamic worlds. The future of the peace process in its entirety hinges on how we deal with this problem. It is obvious that the latest Israeli measures are yet another manifestation of the intended judaization of Al-Quds al-Sharif, creating additional factors relating to the legal status of the Holy City.

Saudi Arabia, which opposes any desecration of the Islamic shrines in Jerusalem, views these serious measures as a revelation of Israel's premeditated intentions to judaize Al-Quds al-Sharif, wipe out the Arab and Islamic heritage of Jerusalem and legitimize Israeli schemes. We wish to warn of the catastrophic consequences of these measures, which explicitly run counter to all resolutions of international legality. Our position will always be that any settlement of the question of Jerusalem will take into consideration the resolutions of international legality, particularly Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which stipulates the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories that have been occupied since 1967, and resolutions 252 (1968) and 267 (1969), which relate to Al-Quds al-Sharif.

The Security Council has repeatedly called for the implementation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and for its application to all the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Al-Quds al-Sharif. It has called on Israel to abide by the provisions of the agreement. The Council has declared in many resolutions that all Israeli measures aimed at altering the demographic and legal status of the Holy City are null and void. Settlement activities violate the 1993 Oslo communiqué and the 1995 Interim Agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, particularly, the agreement of both parties to carry out negotiations on the settlements in the second phase. This categorically meant that no party would create any additional facts on the ground that would affect the outcome of the negotiations or render the agreements pointless and futile. Israel, however, persists in creating the so-called Israeli security zones and continues its economic siege of Palestinian cities to oppress the Palestinian people.

Israel's arrogance blinds it to the present and future international implications of its actions. It implants in the Israeli psyche concepts incompatible with peace and security for all. The international media are now reporting confrontations and massacres resulting from the opening of the tunnel, rather than new progress in the peace process.

The Arab countries would welcome a just and lasting peace. The Palestinians have made concessions in the hope that the Israeli party would respond with a genuine desire for equal coexistence, would abandon policies of containment and expansionist greed, and would put an end to measures leading to the judaization of Palestine.

It is the responsibility of the international community to support the peace process until it has been completed. The Security Council must therefore bring about the closing of the Israeli tunnel extending under the foundations of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and must put an end to illegal Israeli measures with respect to Al-Quds Al-Sharif. We call upon the sponsors of the Madrid peace process, the United States of America and the Russian Federation, and upon the European Union and all peace-loving countries to shoulder their responsibility: to put pressure upon Israel to effect no changes in the Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, the first kiblah and the third holiest shrine, and to save the Middle East peace process.

The President *(interpretation from French)*: I thank the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Djibouti. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Olhaye (Djibouti): At the outset, Sir, I wish to congratulate you most warmly on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. We are confident of your skills and experience; there is no doubt that the Council is in good hands. We also wish to express our deep gratitude to Ambassador Tono Eitel of Germany for having successfully and capably guided the work of the Council last month.

We are witnessing the calculated implementation of a deliberately provocative policy by the new Israeli Government, a policy designed to reverse the fruits of years of hard work, sacrifice and good faith on the part of the previous Government, the Palestinians, the Arabs and the international community. The obvious and precipitous decline in trust and in mood throughout the region has been recognized by all, to the extent that it was no surprise that the act by the Israeli authorities of opening a tunnel under one of Islam's holiest shrines, the Al-Aqsa Mosque in East Jerusalem, provoked a fierce and justified reaction by the people of Palestine. The resulting shooting of civilian demonstrators, which has left hundreds dead and wounded, justly deserves a unanimous universal outcry of condemnation. One is hard put to argue with those who say the Israeli rule is that "Arabs only know the language of force".

So Likud's first 100 days have seen a litany of dithering, vagueness and ambiguity regarding agreements already reached and signed, and a reneging on the final status negotiations embracing critical issues such as Jerusalem, an independent Palestinian State, borders, and full and total Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab lands. Further, confusion and distress have been sown by the decision of the Likud Government to approve the construction of new settlements and highways on confiscated Arab land, all in total defiance of commitments and agreements made, and in contravention of resolutions and conventions. Without question, these moves violate the spirit that prevailed only recently.

We are all aware of the hardships inflicted upon the Palestinian people by the border closures, which have led to deteriorating living conditions, unprecedented levels of unemployment and an economy which may technically, if not in fact, be in bankruptcy. It is against this overall tapestry, woven to create a reversal of commitments already undertaken and leading to a state of hopelessness and despair, that the opening of the tunnel provided the straw that broke the camel's back. The reaction by the Palestinian people appears to have been one that crossed all lines of class, age and gender: to confront an army with a bold disregard of loss and sacrifice.

What can be done to bring calm and a return to the peace process? We believe that construction work in old Jerusalem must cease forthwith, that Israeli troops must withdraw from Hebron as stipulated in the peace accords, and that plans to expand Jewish settlements in the West Bank must be terminated. Border closures must be reversed as well, and there must be an unambiguous reaffirmation of the principle of land for peace as envisioned in resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

It may be well to recall that the issue of Palestine has been before the Council virtually since the inception of the United Nations, and that of the occupied territories for nearly 30 years. While in that time other seemingly intractable issues around the world have received full consideration and achieved finality, the Palestinian issues continue to languish in the archives of the Council. This unprecedented indecisiveness on the part of the international community has been an embarrassment to the Council, creating a situation of unrelieved tribulation and humiliation. Yet outside the Council, the combined efforts of many appeared to have finally broken the chains of futility. With the negotiations in Oslo and in Madrid, and with the momentous signing in Washington in 1993, a framework for resolution, peace and progress was developed. Unfortunately, the promise and hope raised by those valiant efforts seem to be slowly receding from our grasp, and the questions now validly posed by all are, "What peace? What process?".

We are witnessing a dangerous fall into past patterns of confrontation and hopelessness, of old attitudes. But as long as there are many who tenaciously believe that peace is possible in the Middle East if we only give it a chance, there is hope. Let us give peace a chance.

The President: I thank the representative of Djibouti for the kind words he addressed to me and to my predecessor.

(spoke in French)

The next speaker is the representative of Lebanon. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: I wish on behalf of my delegation to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. I wish also to pay tribute to the efforts of your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Germany, as President of the Council last month.

We wish to express our appreciation of the fact that members of the Security Council promptly consented to hold this meeting to consider the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. The events of recent days, which have left scores of dead and wounded, undoubtedly constitute a grave turning point in the situation in the region. We were not surprised by this Israeli escalation: on several occasions we have warned that the leaders of Israel are not interested in peace, that their expansionist aims in various guises — such as security — stand above all other Israeli interests. They wish to impose new principles incompatible with the peace process that began in Madrid.

We had hoped, during the holding of the Madrid Conference in 1991 and the development of the principles and foundations of the peace process, to see a new era in our region in which a just, lasting and comprehensive peace would prevail. The Arab parties took part in this process in good faith, but Israel's relentless colonialist aims and its policy of expansion and seizure of territories have dashed these hopes. Indeed, the new Israeli Government dealt a nearly fatal blow to these hopes when it expressly declared that it was reneging on the commitments underlying the peace process, resumed the settlement process, refused to resume peaceful negotiations that had continued despite all obstacles, and took measures to annex East Jerusalem. The opening of the tunnel under the Al-Aqsa Mosque threatens not only the security of the Mosque itself, but also international peace and security in the region and in the world.

We have repeated on several occasions that the Holy City of Jerusalem is crucial to the peace and security of the region because of its religious, emotional and historical significance and its importance to Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims and Christians of all ages throughout the world. Strengthened by this conviction, we would like to state the following.

First, we are in full solidarity with the Palestinian people. What is happening today confirms once again that this people rejects occupation, no matter the occupation force.

Secondly, the current problem is not a chance development; it is the result of Israeli policies and the Israeli mentality. Consequently, in order to face these problems, we must adopt a position in the international community, as represented by this Council, clearly reaffirming to Israeli leaders that we reject attempts to annex East Jerusalem as well as colonization or settlement activities in other occupied Arab territories. In asking for this, we are in fact serving future peace in the region: Showing indulgence to the Israel leaders could result in violence against Israelis and Arabs alike. Our position is in accordance with Security Council and all international resolutions, as well as with the principles of international law, which remains the very basis of the civilized world today.

We believe that the Council is duty-bound to act to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the Charter and resolutions it has adopted in the past, in accordance with one standard and as it has done in other areas of the world. Resolutions 242 (1967), 267 (1969), 271 (1969), 298 (1971) and 476 (1980) have all declared null and void Israel's administrative and legislative measures and its attempts to annex Jerusalem.

Thirdly, the pretext of security put forward by Israelis to justify their settlement and expansionist measures, which underlay the events that just took place, has proven misguided, since those steps have led to an escalation of violence and a worsening of tensions. What peace can exist under continued occupation? *Faits accomplis* imposed by force are not viable and are doomed to failure. True peace is at hand if we act on the bases we all agreed upon. These bases, set out together in Madrid — first and foremost the exchange of "land for peace" and the implementation of international legitimacy — reaffirm the need for Israel to return Arab occupied territories, including Jerusalem and the Golan up to the line of June 1967, pursuant to resolution 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and for it to withdraw beyond Lebanon's internationally recognized borders, pursuant to resolution 425 (1978).

We in Lebanon reaffirm that we shall never agree to any proposal, new or old, that threatens our national policy. Lebanon will continue to reject any attempts to exclude other Arabs, especially Syria. Meaningless

slogans calling for peace and meetings should not allow Israel to continue its settlement policies without the criticism of international public opinion.

Fourthly, we call on both States that sponsored the Middle East peace process to play their roles, not only in calming things down in the occupied Palestinian territories and convincing Israel to close the tunnel, but also in revitalizing the peace process and resuming it at the point at which it stopped and in accordance with the Madrid principles and the principle of "land for peace", pursuant to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

What is happening in the Palestinian occupied territories is only one link in a large chain of continued violence in our region. It is not enough to calm spirits. Dozens of civilians were killed in southern Lebanon during Israeli bombings aimed against one of the United Nations posts and which caused the death of hundreds of people. Violence is continuing every day in southern Lebanon because of Israeli occupation and dozens of people are being killed in Palestine today. We urge the sponsors of the peace process to pursue it in accordance with the principles approved in Madrid with a view to achieving a just, global and lasting peace in the region.

Fifthly, the Security Council must shoulder its responsibility to preserve peace in the region. We are asking for the Council to adopt a resolution and to follow up on its implementation. If this Council does not adopt such a resolution, it will be forced to meet again very soon because the violence will continue.

We are asking for a resolution that clearly expresses the international community's condemnation and opposition to Israeli policy, to the annexation of Al-Quds and to the expansion of settlements. This resolution should require Israel to comply with the international rule of law.

We should also adopt a clear-cut position that reflects the determination of the international community to continue with the peace process on the basis of the Madrid principles, especially the principle of land for peace.

The Security Council is called upon to shoulder its historic responsibilities because time is short and is not working in favour of peace. What is happening in the region does not threaten only the people of the region. We would also like to urge through the Council, all the parties involved to act in a serious-minded manner and to take steps to convince Israel to return to the Madrid principles.

The President (*interpretation from French*): The next speaker is the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, Mr. Ka to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ka, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: (*interpretation from French*): Allow me at the outset to convey to you, Sir, in my capacity as the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, my warm congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. I should also like to express my gratitude to the members of the Security Council for having been kind enough to authorize me to speak at this meeting, and to share with them the Committee's appreciation for the speed with which they acceded to the request of the Arab Group to hold an emergency meeting devoted essentially to the flare-up of tensions in the land of Palestine.

Between 1993 and September 1995, the international community welcomed with joy and relief the signing of several historic agreements between President Arafat and the late Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzak Rabin. Those agreements crowned years of negotiations that were intended to reach a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine and — over and above the question of Palestine — to end the painful conflict that has raged in the Middle East for several decades.

This same international community had hailed with optimism the effective implementation in the field of the practical arrangements of the different accords and agreements calling for the withdrawal of Israel from Gaza and Jericho, the redeployment of Israeli forces and the establishment of the Palestinian national authority.

Dreams began to become reality with the first free and democratic elections held on Palestinian land. This hope for peace finally regained between Israel and its Arab neighbours, was further nourished by the process of dialogue that had also begun between Israel and Syria and which left us hope for a peaceful political settlement to the question of the occupied Arab Golan.

All of us had hoped that this much-desired peace process was finally established, and that the return to the logic of war, hatred and frustration of all kinds had been

banished forever. The tragic events taking place before our eyes today in the occupied Arab territories once again highlight the precariousness of the situation in the Middle East and just how dangerous Israeli practices are for the present peace process.

The decision recently taken by the Israeli Government to open a tunnel in the Old City of Jerusalem — the holiest of sites — following the sealing of Palestinian territory, both within Palestine and in its relations with the exterior, for several months; the confiscation of Arab lands to build settlements or roads around areas inhabited by Palestinians; and the measures of intimidation taken against the Arab civilian population show that Israel wishes to stifle the occupied territories economically and to deny the Palestinian people their right to exercise their legitimate rights to self-determination and to establish an independent state, in keeping with international legality and the relevant resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council.

It is therefore important for the international community to exert pressure and take the measures necessary so that the inhumane sealing off of the territories and the restrictions on the movements of Palestinians imposed by the occupying authorities are lifted; that the redeployment of Israeli troops from the city of Hebron on the West Bank should take place as called for in the interim peace accords signed by the former Israeli Government; that construction and expansion of settlements should cease; that the tunnel be closed once and for all; and that, finally, the protagonists — in order not to prove right the enemies of peace — resume the peace process that has been under way since 1993.

Given the Israeli attitude since June 1996, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People continues to be very much concerned, by the situation created by Israel, on behalf of its own security and to the detriment of an entire people whose legitimate aspiration is to live in peace on the soil of its homeland.

The Palestinian national authorities have clearly shown their aspirations to live in peace, in dignity and justice with their neighbours by courageously embarking upon peace negotiations with the Israeli party since 1991, and by taking since then widely-known political measures. It is through this inevitable coexistence that, in the final analysis, the Middle East — a crossroads of history and of the world — will become a region of opportunities, an area of economic growth and political stability.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People remains convinced that many Israelis are still firmly committed to the peace process and condemn the delaying measures of their Government, which would hold back the march of history.

Strengthened by this conviction and in my capacity as the Chairman of the Committee on Palestine, I would like to take the opportunity of this meeting to make an urgent appeal to the Israeli authorities to ask them to reconsider their present policy of scorn and confrontation, and to commit themselves resolutely, as the international community has constantly called for, to recreate the conditions for a climate of confidence and hope by putting the peace process back on the right track — that of a peace that is profitable to both the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the very kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Engin Ansay, Permanent Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure. I now invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ansay (Organization of the Islamic Conference): I should like to extend to you, Sir, my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month.

I should also like to take this opportunity to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Eitel, the Permanent Representative of Germany, for his able performance in steering the work of the Council during the month of August.

On behalf of the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), I thank you for calling upon me to address the Council on the situation in the occupied Arab territories.

At the outset, let me say that I wish I were speaking under better — instead of what have become bitter — circumstances. For we in the OIC had joined forces with the international community in supporting the peace process in the Middle East in full measure, despite some

of the disadvantageous elements that the relevant agreements carried affecting Palestinian interests. We were even beginning to feel hopeful about the future of peace in the area because of the few achievements that had already emerged from the early stages of the implementation of the Oslo accords, and we were prepared to continue to lend our full support towards the attainment of the agreed goals and objectives of the peace agreements.

Regrettably, our hopes, together with those of the well-wishers in the international community, are shattered by the unfortunate turn of events in Palestine, the responsibility for which must lie with Israel and Israel alone. For what has brought about the turmoil is the sum of a series of violations of various elements of the peace agreements by Israel and blatant acts of aggression by the Israeli authorities against the Palestinian people, the results of which we are witnessing today: hundreds of dead and seriously wounded Palestinians and Israelis. Unless the Israeli violations are checked immediately, the situation threatens to get out of control and to assume a much greater dimension than we have witnessed so far, thereby rendering irreparable damage to the peace process.

The unfortunate state of affairs emerges from the hesitation that the new Israeli Government is openly showing about the principles and foundations of the peace process, about the principle of "land for peace" and about honouring the commitments that the country and its people have made solemnly, in black and white, under the peace agreements. Thus, instead of ushering in an era of peace, tranquillity and economic and social development, what the new Government of Israel is bringing in, with impunity, is an era of insecurity and restlessness coupled with economic and social chaos.

If not this, then what else can be expected from such troublesome activities as the inexplicable delay of as long as six months in the redeployment of the Israeli army in Hebron; the unilateral suspension of negotiations; the demolition of Palestinian homes; the continuing blockade imposed upon the City of Al-Quds al-Sharif and other Palestinian territories; the attempts to alter the demographic set-up of Jerusalem, thereby replacing the Arab-Islamic identity of the Holy City with the artificial judaization of the place; the authorization to Jews to invade the Islamic precincts of the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque, which is the third holiest site for Muslims after Mecca and Medina; the restrictions placed on the functioning of the Palestinian institutions; and now the latest: the opening of an entrance to the tunnel extending under the western wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied East Jerusalem, thereby constituting a serious threat to the security of this important shrine.

In order for the peace process to be allowed to work, it is imperative for all sides to create a climate of confidence and to show, by their actions, their resolve to pursue the implementation of the accords as a whole, without being selective. The Palestinians, despite the obstacles being placed in their way, are doing all they can to abide by the provisions of the peace agreements. It is now up to Israel to do likewise if it genuinely seeks and deserves peace.

Here, a well-known saying comes to mind: "If a nation wants to keep another nation in the ditch, it can only do so by staying in the ditch with it." Today, nobody needs to be reminded of this more than the present Government of Israel, and our sincere message to them is the following: If you want to breathe the air of peace, tranquillity and a secure environment, then change your attitude and ways towards the peace process and the Palestinian people, and you too will very soon be out of the ditch.

In the spirit of our solidarity with the peace process in the Middle East, we condemn the continuing atrocities that are being inflicted by the Israeli authorities on the Palestinian institutions and people in flagrant disregard of the peace agreements and human rights. In particular, we condemn the latest act of the opening of an entrance to the tunnel under the esplanade of the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque and demand its immediate closure by the Government of Israel.

We also strongly urge that, while encouraging bilateral discussions between the Palestinian authorities and the Government of Israel aimed at defusing the present explosive situation brought about by Israel in Palestine, the Security Council resume its responsibilities for the maintenance of peace and security in Palestine, including in the first instance measures to close the tunnel extending under the western wall of the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The Palestinian people, at this crucial period in their history, expect and deserve more support from the international community. We therefore appeal to all Member States actively to pursue their support for that people and their national authority so as to give them the means to overcome the ordeal through which they are going, to establish firmly their national institutions and to

continue to take an active part in the peace process, to which they remain deeply committed.

We in the OIC believe in speeding up the peace process and aim at putting it back on track with a view to establishing a just and comprehensive peace in the region and restoring the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to return, their right to self-determination and their right to build their own independent State on their national soil with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital, as well as a complete and speedy Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan and occupied Lebanese territories.

In conclusion, I should like to assure the Council that as soon as the necessary measures to restore peace and security in the area have been undertaken, improving the environment for the resumption of the peace process, the OIC and its 53 member States, representing the very serious concerns of more than one billion Muslims all over the world, will also reinforce their wholehearted support of the peace process in fulfilment of their collective desire to see peace and tranquillity return to the area.

The President: I thank Mr. Ansay for his kind words addressed to me.

(spoke in French)

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Cuba. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Rodriguez Parilla (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation would like to extend to you, Sir, its warmest congratulations and to wish you every success in your term as President of the Security Council. We should also like to express our gratitude to Ambassador Tono Eitel on his brilliant performance.

Barely 100 days after the elections in Israel, that country has committed another flagrant violation of its obligations under international law, international humanitarian law and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council. The climate of aggression and hostility against the Arab peoples and the Palestinian people that has marked the last few months has led to that Government's recent grave actions: opening the entrance to a tunnel located in the Western Wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied East Jerusalem and then launching an Israeli army attack against Palestinian civilians who were peacefully demonstrating against that act. This resulted in hundreds of dead and wounded.

Once again the facts have made it clear that Israel is continuing to follow an aggressive and dangerous policy against the people of Palestine and the Arab people. This represents a constant and unacceptable threat to the entire Middle East peace process and constitutes gross non-compliance with the agreements concluded between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel.

The international community has followed these events with deep concern, and it is regrettable that the many appeals for the continuation and development of the peace process continue to be ignored.

The Security Council has repeatedly affirmed the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to all the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem. It has also repeatedly called upon the occupying Power to abide by its provisions.

On numerous occasions the Security Council has also asked Israel to reverse or halt any action aimed at changing the status of Jerusalem. Once again the Security Council's decisions have been ignored, and the destiny of the Palestinian people and of the whole peace process in the Middle East, including all its consequences for the Arab peoples, are at stake.

How can this happen? Are the Security Council's respectability, legal weight and capacity for action not enough? Is it that its broad competences, including those that it sometimes assumes excessively, do not apply when the human rights, well-being and future of the Palestinian people and the Arab peoples are at stake? Is it that resolutions on Palestine do not have the same validity or standing as others adopted by the Council? In the Middle East we see most clearly the stark contrast between, on the one hand, the unforgivable omissions, silences and inexplicable failure to act and, on the other, the arbitrary excesses of the Security Council.

Today the Security Council is again face to face with reality because of the inconsistency of its earlier actions and its wrong messages, the consequences of which we warned against when dealing with other issues, including the confiscation of Palestinian lands, aggression against Lebanon and, more recently, Iraq.

Impunity is the root cause of the current events, and those that have taken place in the past in that region. The history of conflicts in the Middle East is the history of impunity. Let us hope that the Security Council will find a way to shed its impotence and reaffirm some of the indications of some weeks ago that it can act independently.

Is there any need to state that it is the double standard of United States policy that protects such acts and prevents the solution of the problem as a whole? Is it necessary to show that the veto, or even the threat of a veto, is at the heart of the Council's impotence? What has become of the fiery rhetoric against terrorism?

Once more, it is clear that a profound and democratic reform of the Security Council is necessary. Once again, the General Assembly must, without delay, use its full weight as the universal, pre-eminent and sovereign organ of the United Nations.

Cuba adds its voice to the international community's denunciation of this new Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and occupied Jerusalem. Cuba joins in the vigorous condemnation of the Group of Arab States against the actions of the Israeli occupation forces. Cuba rejects the opening of the tunnel entrance in occupied East Jerusalem, or any use of the tunnel that would jeopardize any sacred temples or archaeological sites that are the heritage of all mankind.

Cuba reaffirms the right of the Palestinian people to have an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital and rejects the measures designed to change the legal status and demographic composition of the Holy City.

Cuba demands the return of all Arab territories occupied by Israel, including the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and occupied southern Lebanon. Cuba demands respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and the internationally recognized frontiers of the States of the region.

Cuba hopes that there will be no delay, that we will not hide the need for action behind long debates, and that the Security Council will express itself with the necessary severity by condemning the Israeli actions and will assume its responsibilities for maintaining international peace and security.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the representative of Cuba for the kind words he addressed to me.

(*spoke in English*)

The next speaker is the representative of India. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Shah (India): Allow me first of all, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month.

The television screen has once again brought into our homes heart-rending scenes of death and destruction. We thought that such scenes from the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem had been firmly put behind us. We grieve for those who have been killed and pray for the recovery of those who have been injured. This loss of life, which should never have occurred, has been caused by the actions of the Israeli authorities in opening a tunnel beneath the Temple Mount in East Jerusalem.

The avoidable loss of innocent lives and the large-scale injuries following the violent clashes have horrified us. The current situation underlines the need for immediate and effective measures to end the violence and create a climate which will allow for purposeful negotiations based on recognition of the underlying causes of the clashes.

The tragic developments in the West Bank and Gaza serve to emphasize the moral, legal and humanitarian imperatives of the Middle East peace process and the necessity of building further on the agreements and understandings, on the basis of the principles and time schedules already agreed upon. At the same time, no unilateral steps should be taken that are not in conformity with the interim agreements and understandings.

India's bond of friendship with the Palestinian people is firm and abiding. Our historic contacts cover almost every aspect of human life and endeavour. This tradition has been renewed and strengthened in modern times. India continues to believe that the question of Palestine remains at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In this context, India has extended unqualified support to the Middle East peace process on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978)

Following the recent political changes in the Middle East, India had been encouraged by the reiteration by all parties of their continued commitment to the Middle East peace process based on the framework established by the Madrid Peace Conference. At the same time, we are concerned that these reaffirmations do not appear to have manifested themselves in commensurate progress in the peace process.

Less than 48 hours ago, the Non-Aligned Foreign Ministers expressed their concern at the recent Israeli action of opening the tunnel beneath the Temple Mount and called for its immediate reversal. I would like to underline the urgent need for this step to be undertaken, even now, to ensure that a process of reconciliation can be initiated without any delay.

The international community has wholeheartedly supported the peace process in the Middle East. Successes that have been achieved so far have not been easy in coming and it would be tragic if these successes were allowed to be whittled away. The international community can provide the necessary support, but it is for the parties to ensure that the impetus that was generated during the recent past is sustained. India would urge all parties to intensify their efforts towards realizing the mutually agreed objectives of the Middle East peace process, keeping in view that lasting peace and stability in the Middle East require the complete solution of the Palestinian question.

The President: I thank the representative of India for the kind words he addressed to me.

(*spoke in French*)

The next speaker is the representative of Costa Rica. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Berrocal Soto (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I congratulate you, Mr. President, most particularly on your proper and skilful leadership of this debate and on your immediate convening of this meeting of the Security Council to consider the delicate situation in the Middle East.

For several years now, Csta Rica has provided its full support to the peace process in the Middle East, and we welcomed with particular pleasure the peace agreements signed in Oslo by Israel and the Palestinian Authority, which demonstrated the important regional and international consensus in favour of the pacification of this very troubled part of the world. The path marked out in Oslo is the path of peace. This is why Costa Rica was deeply disturbed to learn of the regrettable and reprehensible events in the city of Jerusalem and in Ramallah, Nablus, Bethlehem and Gaza. In this context, Costa Rica feels great sorrow over the violent events that have taken place and expresses its profound concern over these events, which most assuredly do not contribute to the appropriate climate of confidence for full implementation of the important commitments taken on in Oslo.

Costa Rica urges and encourages all the parties concerned — particularly the Government of Israel and the Palestinian national authority — to make every effort, as soon as possible, to return to the negotiating process on the implementation of the peace agreements. This should include the resumption of talks between the two parties. We also ask them to take every possible measure to protect and ensure the safety and security of the inhabitants of the affected areas.

In conclusion, Costa Rica expresses its condolences for the victims of these events and its full solidarity with their families. We also wish to reiterate the fundamental principle that holy places must be respected.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the representative of Costa Rica for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Brazil. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Amorim (Brazil): I want to extend my warmest congratulations, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. I also wish to pay tribute to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Germany.

It is with great concern and apprehension that we witness the latest crisis which threatens the peace process in the Middle East. A high number of casualties once again envelops the region in tragedy and mourning. Regrettably, the gradual erosion of a carefully and laboriously designed peace process jeopardizes efforts which have taken years to materialize.

On several occasions, the Brazilian Government has expressed support of this process, which was being rightfully regarded as a symbol of a new era of

understanding with far-reaching implications for the future of the region and an example for the world. It is most unfortunate that the loss of momentum in the peace process in the Middle East during the past few months has inexorably reignited hostility and resentment, leading to the extremely serious events that are now taking place. Only through the renewal of mutual trust among the parties, on the basis of strict compliance with agreements already reached, will it be possible to avoid the spreading of further violence throughout the bereaved region.

As a country where representatives of the most varied ethnic and religious backgrounds coexist in harmony, Brazil extends its solidarity to the families of the victims and reiterates its call for a prompt resumption of sustained dialogue in observance of existing commitments, so as to promote confidence among the parties and secure a peaceful environment for all in the region.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the representative of Brazil for the kind words he addressed to me.

There are no further speakers. I intend to suspend the meeting now.